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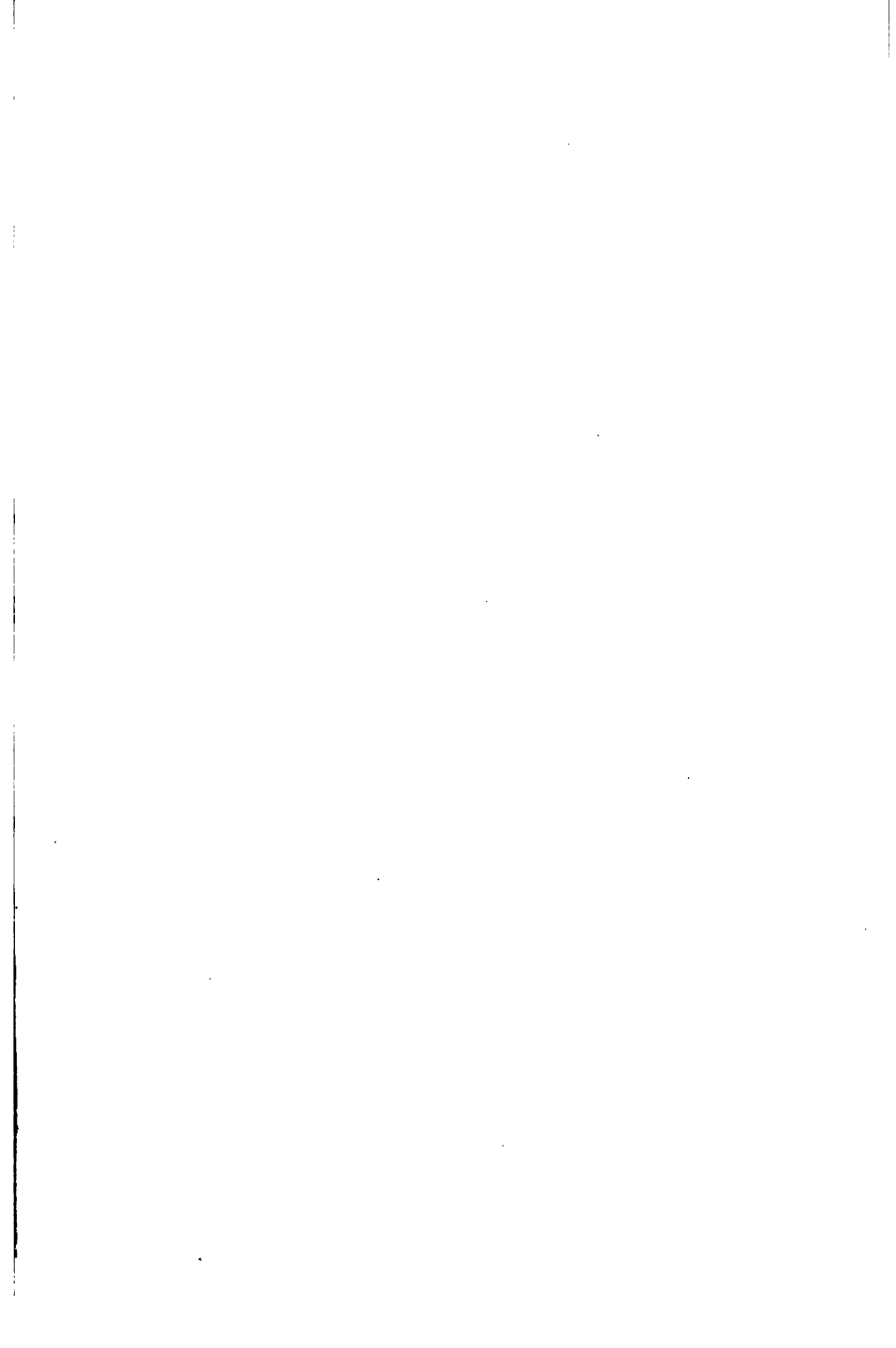
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A Song of Jeweled Hours
The Queen of the Islands
The Bride of Bar-Cocab
The Last Day in the Hospital

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POEMS

BY

GEORGE MACDONALD MAJOR

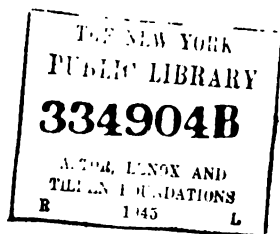
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NEW YORK
LLOYD
26 East 22d Street
1902

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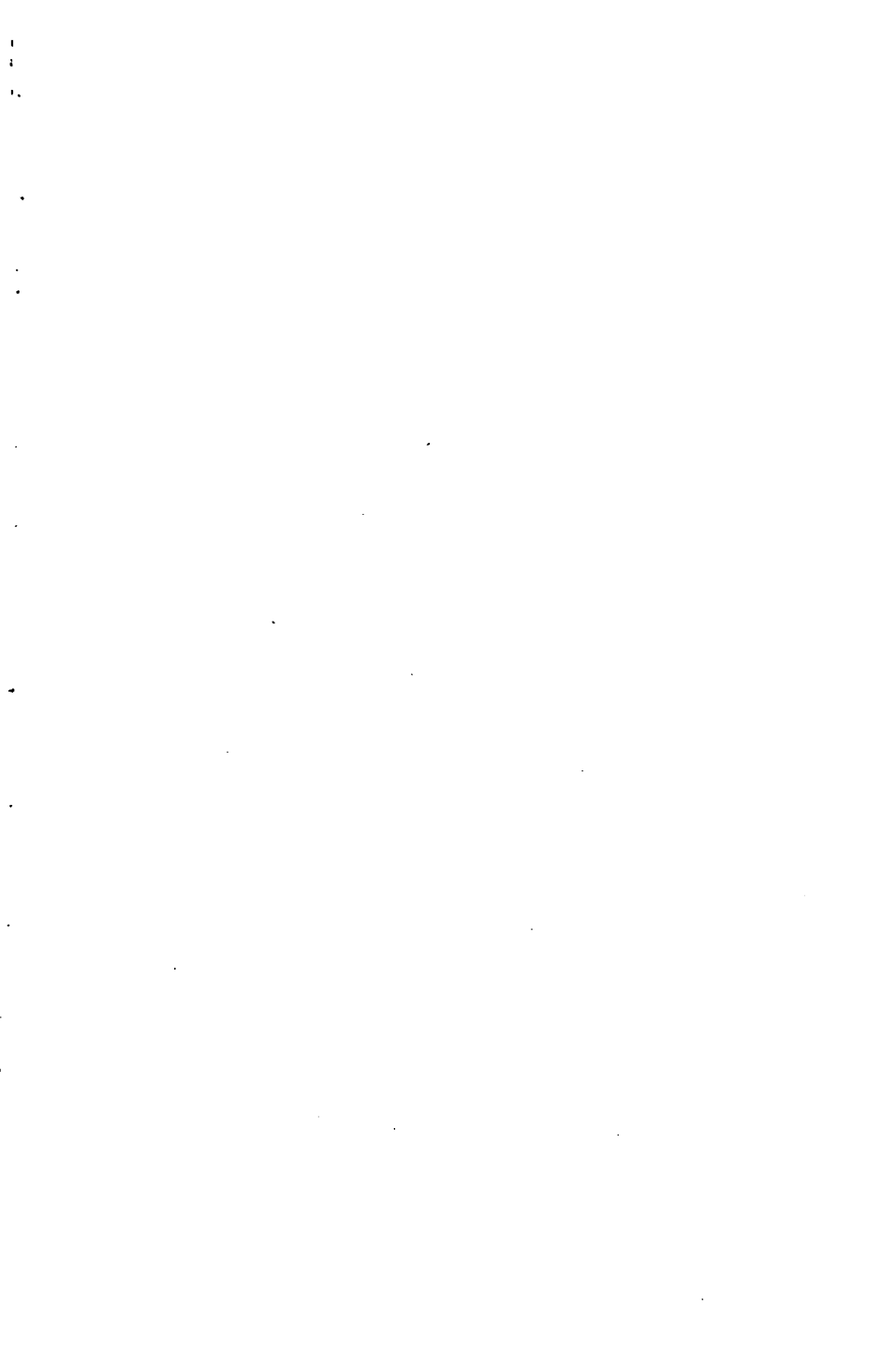
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BY GEORGE MACDONALD MAJOR

**LOVINGLY DEDICATED
TO THE SAINTED MEMORY
OF
MY MOTHER
AND HER SISTER ELIZABETH**

Wm. J.



A Song of Jeweled Hours

A SONG OF JEWELLED HOURS

Muse, whom my incense bearing Youth adored,
Oh gild the garish gloom of these grey years!
For lo! a dimpled joy has fled the hours
Which once tripped laughingly o'er fields of flowers,
But now some blast of early Winter seres,
Save on the heights my daring Fancy soared,
Where old Parnassus glitters like a star
With still its ancient spell alluring from afar.

Ah, save in this the pulse of Youth is stilled,
The leaf is yellow and the flower is dead:
No more Life's dreams lure on my trusting heart,
(Spontaneous dreams without a touch of Art)
The bubble shredded, each bright charm has fled,
But strangely Poesy remains to build,
O'er shattered hopes to disillusioned eyes,
A greener lovelier Earth and bluer fairer skies.

That Youth, impulsive, fled on buoyant wing
With Future glancing eyes pursuing Joy,
Now Age its vision ever backward cast
Relives old pleasures, dotes upon the Past,
The boy would be a man, the man a boy!
So countless generations in the swing
Of Time and Circumstance, fruition crave
Along the self-same grooves from cradle unto grave.

A Song of Jeweled Hours

Although to lengthen the diviner days,—
The dawn of Being and the flush of Youth,—
Fond Memory, magic mirror of the Past,
In insubstantial pageantry has massed
The shadowy phalanx seeming like the truth,
But still she blurs the picture in the haze—
The birth of Thought, awakening Consciousness,
The Soul's development, how vague our keenest guess!

Oh Bluebird, lover at the court of Spring!
A flash of Heaven's bright blue thro' light hung
leaves!
What son of Science can dissect thine egg,
And part the feathered wing, the scaly leg,
The jewelled eye, the pulsing heart that heaves
Incessant,—in that microscopic thing,
The Cell, or tell the sage who sought to know
How in their germinal house the ivory bones might
grow?

Yon sweet babe cooing to his hands and feet,
Rosy and dimpled as the limbs of Love,
What Consciousness has his surroundings wrought?
What vague conception has his vision caught?
What ecstasy? what hope? and strange above
All other mysteries when his lips repeat,
More musical than any song of bird—
His own impalpable thought in that weird thing a word!

Yet strange that on the landscape of the brain
There are no memories etched of wondrous scenes

A Song of Jeweled Hours

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Through which we all have passed—no pictures placed
Of the soul's evolution—all erased
By the experience vast that intervenes
'Twixt Babyhood and Youth. Oh to obtain,
Like songs of ancient years long dispossessed
By later script, a human soul's real palimpsest !

But lo, as faces from the mirror pass,
As tall white lilies nodding o'er a stream
Imprint no image when their flowers are dead,
As the cloud shadows on high hills have fled
When Heaven shines blue, as a forgotten dream,
The Mind's developing, the babe that was
Becomes oblivious—Age remembers Youth—
The clime of Babes is th' only unknown country, sooth !

But in the heart we build a shrine to Youth
And yield perpetual adoration there,
Where is, as the horizon's utmost girth,
The very meeting place of Heaven and Earth,
The land of endless Summer—days all fair—
And large ambition and unsullied truth—
Where loftiest ideals alone inspire,
And the white soul's diviner aspirations fire.

A string of pearls that drop off one by one
Into the darkening sea,—a crown of lights
That 'round a city's forehead brightly rayed
Flash a brief time then separately fade,—
A shrub whose bloom the lingering bee invites

A Song of Jeweled Hours
The Queen of the Islands
The Bride of Bar-Cocab
The Last Day in the Hospital

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F



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L.C.

A Song of Jeweled Hours

The sweet allurements of the earthly Spring,
The fire or picture bright on insect wing,
The gentle rain, clear skies and stars sublime,
Are these forgotten or more glorious there?
Beyond the cold black river of Death's tide,
Are there Elysian vales where souls live satisfied?

Oh yes, most truly that evangel saith—
The instinct of our immortality—
That throws an iridescent light across
The darkness of the grave, the present loss,
And lights the torch of Hope, whereby we see
The disembodied soul untouched by Death,
And past the Night of Dissolution, dawning
The clear celestial glow of Life's eternal morning.

Oh Youth and Hope and Morning! Ye are one.
How lovely are the garments of the Morn!
The pearly grey, the rosy blush that hints
Through fleecy clouds of more voluptuous tints,
Where star bespangled Night's blue robe is torn,
Blown sideways by the breathing of the Sun,
And streaming through the filmy rent, the rays
Of topaz and of ruby—gems adorning Day's.

Hush! Nature stands, her finger on her lips,
To catch the full avowal of the Light.
The slumbering Earth awakes, her thousand eyes
Expectant, scan the warm revealing skies,
Still dream lit with the visions of the Night.

A Song of Jeweled Hours

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The Orient bursts in flame, the shadow slips
Adown the mountain's shoulder lingeringly
Across the peaceful vale, and melts into the sea.

The Earth thrills with desire,—a light winged breeze
Flutters by spells the loose hung leaves and buds,
The opening flowers look Eastward. Even the blades
Dew-glistening, of the grasses in the glades
Sway softly as the light in golden floods
Pours through the gates of Dawn. In foaming seas
The waves of cloud roll on to the far West
Or hang in blue mid-heaven, like chariots of the Blest.

The Universe is for a moment still
With fulness of great hope, upon the air
A charm seems brooding. 'Tis nor day nor night
When lo, the Sun uplifts himself to sight!
A million songs salute him everywhere,
The flowers swing incense and from vale and hill
A million trees clap hands and roll along
The praise of Light in one grand universal song.

That swells the diapason here begun
By flute of bird and little insect fife,
To larger, grander circles that rejoice
Beyond the syllables of human voice.
A glorious chorus perhaps of higher life—
Insect to man and seraph after man—
Prolong the praise, even from the earthly sod,
Unto the radiant throne of the ineffable God!

A Song of Jeweled Hours

Awake, oh Youth! to glorious action wake!
No languid Sardanapalus is our theme.
Sweep o'er Fate's bars on Opportunity's wings,
Let Night suffice t'ave merely dreamed great things
Or nursed a hopeless grief! With Morning's beam
The myriad creatures of wild Nature take
The burden of existence up and work.
Shall man, alone astray, his grander duties shirk?

Especially in this freeborn land of ours,
My Country, with the halo on thy brow
Of deathless Youth—a miracle to the Past,
The marvel of republics, best and last,
A brother to the ancients, proudly now
Admitted, panoplied with equal powers—
A royal welcome gives the World to thee,
Thou darling of the Skies and idol of the Sea!

Beloved of God, endowed of Nature's grace,
Columbia, perfect world within the world,
God's working model built into the globe,
The Earth in little,—in thy upheld robe
Thou gatherest every gift that others, whirled
From pole to pole, must with long travail trace
Their journey to obtain. Lo! at thy feet
The best of every clime within thine own complete.

What sugared fruits the burning Tropic shapes,
What edible offerings from the snow clad North,
The temperate West, the rich and sunny East!
Thy soil produces all—a world wide feast!

A Song of Jeweled Hours

15

With corn and wheat thou drivest richly forth,
Crowned with wild olives, purpled with rare grapes.
Whate'er the tongue of epicure might crave,
Thy bosom holds or is the tribute of thy wave.

What inexhaustible coffers are thy hills
Of mineral wealth, of gems and golden ore!
The miner's pick here shames Aladdin's lamp,
And Vulcan's forge is to thy mining camp
An infant's toy. Thou hast profusely more
Than Prodigality could waste, that fills
Even like the ancient Hebrew widow's cruse—
Replenished as withdrawn, and filled again by use.

Thy mountains seem huge altars of the gods,
Lifting their snow crowned summits through the
cloud;
Thy rivers an infinity of boats
Ten thousand kings might ransom as it floats;
Thy trees like some great tented army crowd
The forest space, and by incalculable odds
Thy prairies rivalled the Siberian waste
With miles on painted miles of swaying blossoms graced.

Yet not alone creations vast as these,
Which Nature's hyperbolic mood constructs,
But vales of dreamlike beauty, glassy lakes,
Where sails the lily and the white swan makes
Her nest, whereby the dappled deer conducts
Her fawn to drink, and whispering groves of trees

A Song of Jeweled Hours

That echo the wild song bird's airy note,
Matin and vesper hours o'er the stilled valley float.

Not all thy cataracts plunge, Niagara like,
From dizzy heights with thunderous roar, nor all
Thy rising ground uplifts to mountain peaks;
But there are sparkling rills like silver streaks
That flow through moss and fern, or rise and fall
Like fairy founts, no higher than would strike
The outstretched hand, and gentle hills whose sides
Are terraces of vines, wherein the vintner prides.

Red apples, golden oranges and limes
And shining berries,—field too after field
Whose magic ashes to its lover's eyes
Evoke the ghosts of summer clouds and skies
'Neath which it grew,—the Cotton's snow white yield,
The palm, the melon crown the harvest times
With most luxurious Plenty, and far borne
Beyond the distant seas, the gifts of thy full horn.

But what of cities built, whose citizens
Outcount the Old World's capitals, whose stones
Were laid a thousand years before—of spires
That dome the melodies of sacred choirs,
Of marts of trade, of courts of law, of zones
Of architectural glory, or of dens
Where live the submerged millions side by side
With tunnels, towers and theatres,—a city's shame and
pride?

A hundred years ago, where stands to-day
A hundred cities, roved the Indian brave.
Where now the smoke of factories ascends,
The Wigwam's fires burned, or for sinister ends,
The naked pagan, noiseless as the grave,
Crept stealthily where his sleeping victim lay;
Where now the church bells peal the wedding hymn,
The savage warwhoop rang through forest aisleways
dim.

Ill fated Race! and must it ever be,—
The glistening trail of Civilization wet
With savage blood, the car of Progress seem,
Though golden axled in the Poet's dream,
So like the car of Juggernaut? Even yet,
Th' irreconcilable conflict still we see,
Though less diverse, where Boer and British meet,
And Filipino clans against our Flag compete.

With no false standard let us weigh the two,
Lest we be warring with the ways of God.
The light and darkness cannot co-exist.
If one be right, the Wrong must not persist.
And Peace, the blood red path of War hath trod
From immemorial days, till Error sue
For pardon, and do right from pure remorse—
Till then t' uphold her triumph, Peace must lean on
Force.

Ah, hard to learn, and harder still to love,
The truth that cuts more keenly than the sword!

A Song of Jeweled Hours

Yet this wisdom and the fruit is peace.
The throne of God must fall or error cease,—
Judge which is right or likely. Yet abhorred
As he should be, who would exalt above
Th' Almighty Will the pirate flag of Wrong,
How many such to whom all virtues else belong!

Oh Philip of Mount Hope! the brave, the fair,
To Indian eyes, the generous and the great,
Yet nathless Civilization's enemy!
Misguided Chief! the Muse must weep for thee,
Who fought so gallantly the nobler state
For country, hearth and altar with despair,
And died heroically to save thy clan,
And yet died fighting all the holiest hope of man.

For surely none e'er built on nobler plan
Who founded empires or created states,
Than did the fathers in their civic ken,
Who dared wild woods, wild beasts and wilder men,
Crossing the unknown Ocean to their fates,
And planting the republic here of men,
Beneath whose flag should be no slave, no rod
Of Caste, nor spiritual tyrant in the place of God.

Oh nobler than descent from kingly loins!
Thou need'st not envy Britain's storied page,
(Which is in part thy heritage of praise)
Nor Greece nor Rome their mock heroic days,—
Oh thou, whose Signers brought the Earth's best age,
That now its olden, golden age rejoins,

A Song of Jeweled Hours

19

The World's New Testament of Liberty,
'The despots' doom—the Declaration of the Free.

Usona,* still in youth and like all youth
Surpassing lovely, may'st thou ever be
The mother of the exile, and the hope
Of trodden climes. Where'er the weak may cope
With throned Oppression may they turn to thee,
And gain new courage, till thy leavening truth
Shall franchise all the Earth, and bid her fling
Fore'er aside, the tyranny of priest and king.

This hope lies in thy young men and their work,
In whom unselfish ardors best aspire.
That high, divine enthusiasm which
Springs strong in youth, and makes its instincts rich
With promise for the race, that native fire
Of altruism, that forbids it shirk
Whate'er of toil or danger looms above
Its ideals, be they country, church, or fame, or love.

Oh Love! thou art the natural clime of Youth,
Its soul's complexion from its earliest dawn,
When first it sucked the milk of life and love
From the white bosoms that leaned soft above
With warm reciprocal affection, on
Through Nature worship and its pets, and sooth,
Through childish friendships, till it finds all grace,
And hope, and joy resplendent, in one only face.

* U(nited) S(tates) o(f) N(orth) A(merica).

A Song of Jeweled Hours

A face with all the glory of a star,
A light diviner than the sun or moon,
That fills the Earth with rarer atmosphere,
And makes the old World new, a radiance clear
And soft as sparkling waves in shining June,
That brings eternal Spring in hearts that are
Prepared, that shows all fair things still more fair,
And o'er the rest, even throws a veil of Beauty there.

All Earth is Love's—the glorious play of light,
The music of falling waters, cloudless skies,
The breath of flowers, the blush of harvest fruit,
(The very birds, love touched, no longer mute,
Sing rhapsodies to Love's delighted eyes)
The dewy hush of Morn, the star-gemmed Night,
Through the wide Universe, along the Sun's
Far golden way, the current of Love's pulses runs.

The paths of Love are fringed and winged with flame!
Who does not love, forsakes celestial bliss,
Who has not loved, has surely lived in vain,
Outside the Eden where he could obtain
Free entrance and fruition, since 'tis this
Alone is left, though with a different name,
Of the young world's original Paradise,
Where still descends an angel, bearing Heaven's device.

Where Love's feet touch the ground, it bears a flower;
Where Love leans, gushes forth a living rill.
It lights the soul of man, and lo! his heart

A Song of Jeweled Hours

21

Becomes a temple. Romance, Fancy, Art,
And Music, through the brain ecstatic thrill.
Yea, grander still the largess of its dower,
Where Faith and Hope alone the halo see,
Love moulds the noble thought of Immortality.

Love taught the human hand its skill at first,
And e'er without Love, Art is selfishness;
A thing p'rhaps fair to look upon, but cold
And heartless as the miser's clammy hold,
And meaningless as ornaments of dress
From some Etruscan tomb. Life seems accurst
That ends in some neglected grave, above
Whose weed grown mound, there have been shed no
tears of Love.

The tears of Love! alas, the tears of Love!
Of love bereft and widowed. Be controlled,
For all—the king even, with his crown of pride—
Lay each extrinsic circumstance aside
Who reach the end—the Usurer, his gold,
Beauty, her roses, favored none above
The beggar,—so at last, Love's darling dies,
And at the bier, the lone survivor's tear-stained eyes.

But there are memories, loved and tender, left,
And Hope, that sees a rainbow through her tears;
While still the heart repeats, "I once was blest,
My love in death was pillowed on this breast.
One goes awhile before to brighter spheres,

A Song of Jeweled Hours

Where I shall follow shortly." So bereft
Of sight, but strong in Love and Trusting, saith,
"There can but temporary ill accrue from Death."

But oh, the tears, the bitter tears of Love
Betrayed and sullied! Like a sea-weed cast
Upon the alien shore to waste and die,
A thing disdained of every passer by!
Alas, that aught once fair could e'er be classed
With such extremes,—the heaven of heavens above,
The hell of hells below,—or e'er amerce
The sweet to venomous flower—the blessing to a curse.

Happy the youth whose love in innocence,
And stainless honor, seeks the Altar's grace!
All Heaven and Earth raise hands to bless his love,
His faith shall be the constancy of the dove,
His labor, glory, and his home, a place,
Where honest Hospitality shall dispense
To honoring friends, a joyous festal board.
His pride shall be his offspring, he of them adored.

Not so the laughing leman's lawless love,
Though dance and song speed on the rosy hours,
And sparkling wine and thoughtless repartee
Fill Bacchanalian revels with loud glee,
Enjoyment even Phryne soon deflowers
Of every charm, ere Time's ungallant shove
Displace from Beauty's eminence. Ah me!
How deathly bitter will Satiety taste to thee.

This is the primal curse, that never dies !
The bane of wrong desire—the palate cloyed !
Just as it stoops with lewd and feverish haste
The dainties of th' unhallowed feast to taste,
The soul reels faint from that but now enjoyed,
And turns disgusted with a sick surprise,
To find what once desirous seemed and fair,
Should be the outer veil of foulness festering there.

This is no fable of the moralist—
Of Dead Sea apples burnished golden red,
That tempt the taste to take then to the teeth
Turn salty ashes hid the skin beneath
A thousand thousand o'er the wide world sped,
Upon the path of Cain, where Chance may list,
Seeking the river Lethe—to forget
Their sole, footsore desire,—teach the same parable yet.

Oh Woman, flower of heaven or fruit of hell !
Wine of the mercy or the wrath of God !
According as her soul may wield the sway
Of Passion, or in Lust's or Honor's way.
A glory and a grace, if she hath trod
In the white light of chastity—a spell,
Inspiring men to heroic deeds, that be
The boast of Time—the victories of the pure and free.

But ah, more deadly than the cobra's glance,
Or honey of Trebizond that mads the brain !
The melting eye, low whisper, amorous sigh,
And the warm breast's voluptuous reply.

A Song of Jeweled Hours

What gifts from men could not fair Helen obtain?
What soul escape whom Circe would entrance?
Who with th' Egyptian Syren could dispute?
Or to ripe Beauty's lips deny her pleading suit?

But far from Youth to lose in myrtle groves
Its virile promise and its strenuous race,
Or sulk Achilles fashion in the tent
Of Opportunity;—for hours misspent,
No hand can turn upon the Dial's face
The shadow back, that ever forwards roves.
For Youth, achievement! Let no cause delay—
Lest Glory ope her wings and fly fore'er away.

Achieve, achieve and honorably achieve!
What has not Youth achieved? Behold the waste
Where dragons champed, and thorny cacti throve,
A city shines, the jungle is a grove
For Labor's recreation. Interlaced,
Colossal bridges span where cataracts heave,
Or tunnels pierce the high forbidding Alps.
The iron roads scale their sides or cap their cloud veiled
scalps.

In deserts vast to brave the dread simoon,
Through trackless wilds to plunge with dauntless
heart,
To fight the prowling tiger, and to dare
The tawny lion in his midnight lair,
To crush the cobra, risk the poisoned dart
Of the fierce aborigine—the doom

A Song of Jeweled Hours

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Of Indian capture from Malayan isles
To the Aleutian shores where Summer never smiles—

Has not youth faced them all? And ventured life
On many a chartless sea, aye dove beneath,
Into the treacherous Ocean's caverns dark,
And snatched even from the dread jaws of the shark
The lustrous pearl to gem a votive wreath
To Beauty; dared the elemental strife,
Through hurricanes and lightnings, blundered on
Where Duty called—there Youth without demur has
gone.

Yes, these thy triumphs are and dearly bought!
The vista of the Ages in their script,
Which we call History, tells the precious price
Of blood and sweat and tears and sacrifice
Where Youth with Nature wrestled and equipped
Our own consummate day—to which is brought,
Fit legacy to the heir of centuries!
All pomp and circumstance of luxury and ease.

Still stalwart Youth seeks not soft, silken sloth
For hours of leisure. Perhaps a three league walk
E'er morning dews are dry upon the way,
The summer idlesse of a holiday,
Beneath green trees and sweet congenial talk
With friends, or perhaps one dearer still, or both,
Or by the murmurous sea or vine hid nook,
Alone, yet not alone, with some long treasured book.

A Song of Jeweled Hours

Oh true and most ennobling are the charms
Of Books, unselfish, uncomplaining friends!
Give me, ere Strength decline, and Health decay,
A home and plot, walled in by blooming spray,
Which will supply my wants, and his who bends
His way occasionally to my door for alms;
And 'round my room encase the books I love.
I ask of Earth no wealthier state or rank above.

Within the cloistered quiet of that room,
The riches of the ages would be mine!
The company of saint, and sage, and king,
Would there be with me, deathless bards to sing
Their deathless songs, and master wits to shine
And chase with aptly spoken words all gloom—
The great of old, the noblest of to-day,
Would be my ministers, and in my service stay!

Who could have more? Not thou, poor slave of gold,
Whose sole ambition is to gather more!
Not thou, enamored with the lust of power,
Whose soul is soiled to reign thine earthly hour!
Nor thou, vain fop! whose thought can only soar
To cut a coat, or tie with a new fold,
A silk cravat. Ah me, no poverty
Is half so pitiable as either of the three!

To have few wants, and have the health and strength
With thine own labor to supply them all;
To furnish heart and mind and be content
With inexpensive housing; to have lent

A hand to help the neighbor who may fall;
Withal no Pharisee, feeling yet thy length
From God's requirements—still uprooting greed
And selfishness and envy—thou art rich indeed!

The friends of Youth, whose friendship is as wine,
The sunshine of the soul, we ne'er forget.
But friends most real, most intimate, and fresh,
Have ne'er put on the solid veil of flesh,
Nor robed themselves in our mortality yet,
But linger airy creatures, half divine,
Though born of human intellect, and shrined
In our own deathless essences—the soul and mind.

Strange,—you and I, though we have met and loved,
Held hands, and are most lonely when apart,
And heart to heart revealed with prodigal speech,
Are still unsolvable mysteries, each to each!
These bodies are not you and I. No art
Can teach the eye to see, or hand ungloved
To clasp the invisible conscious self within,—
The tangible investiture of bone and flesh and skin!

There are, who having eyes, yet through some fault,
Or niggardly mood of Nature, from their birth
Can never with corporeal vision trace
The daylight, or the darkness, or the face
Of kin; and some, with still less pitiful dearth,
The green of grass, or blue of heaven's vault,
Can easily distinguish, but no more,—
The seven rayed prism shines to them with three or four.

A Song of Jeweled Hours

But all of us are born with eyes too gross
To see the shape or color of the soul.
The separate personality, which though linked
With bodily volition, is distinct
And definite,—the self, complete and whole—
Not heart, nor brain, nor flesh, which loose or close
Outlines its character. And stranger still,
Neither e'er saw the I, that guides in each the will!

And so because, perchance, as one has said,
"Our life is like a story that is told,"
The children of the brain, the poet's tale,
The novelist's fiction, in our thoughts prevail
More real, than the daily deeds enrolled
In living men, who soon will be the dead.
The gold they fought for, others soon will store,
Their names, be soon forgot, their dust, e'en be no more!

Longfellow, Bryant, Emerson and Poe,
These in my Youth were laurelled, aureoled names;
And Whittier, Lowell, Holmes and Hawthorne, threw
The glamor of our nascent national hue,
Upon its sky of Literature. In flames,
Their stars flashed forth, the incredulous world to
show
In varied moods and voices, a refrain
From native fountains, drawn and sung in patriot strain.

Of these, two were enshrined apart, and dwelt
In loneliness, from out whose oriel, poured

A Song of Jeweled Hours

29

Thick clouds of incense, hovering like a veil,
To robe in shadow these within the pale
Of the weird temple, where they both adored,
Akin, but yet dissimilar. One had knelt
Beside the altar where the glory shone,
And one, in darkened aisles, nor e'er had further gone.

For Poe missed, somehow, seeing the divine.
He wrestled with the demons that oppose
The higher Way, and saw but fettered ghosts,
Where more perspicuous vision sees the hosts
Of liberated spirits. Verse and prose
A rapt disciple he at Beauty's shrine,
But not alas! a prophet. Hawthorne saw
The Providence of Nature and the spiritual law.

The one, a ritualist, who loved the types
And vestments of the service, surpliced choirs,
And swinging censers, while the organ made
Bizarre, yet wondrous music, while he played
The same, sad theme of which he never tires,
And 'wakening Echo, who, with dulcet pipes,
Called back the repentend for his Lenore,
And others, loved and gone and hopeless evermore.

The melodist of the lost! upon a lyre
Of lovely sounds, whose echoes were as hues,—
Chromatic words, that in the higher scale
Stung sibilant with satire; but the veil
Of sense and flesh obscured the deeper views.

A Song of Jeweled Hours

The soul died with the body, and the higher,
And Godlike rays of immortality
To Hawthorne as a sun, Poe's genius could not see!

Like Kipling, a strabismus of the soul
Confused his vision, hence a life askew,—
The corollary of relentless Fate—
That circumscribes his fame, for none are great
Who measure the material to our view
As larger than the spiritual. When the roll
Of men pre-eminently grand, ye scan,
The body is the husk, the spirit is the man!

And Hawthorne, with his clearer insight, seeing
The tincture of the soul by lust and sin,
The heavenly law, with the divine intent,
That bids Remorse, the spectre, dog the bent
Of Evil, until exorcised within,
By the regeneration of the being,
In shining harmony with righteousness,
Bears honorably the palm by Virtue's pure duress!

And he, our singing Brahmin, who has made
Philosophy seem poetry, and song,
Philosophy, had also shared his praise
In the Academy with living bays.
But lo! in groves of Baal his way went wrong!
He listened to false priests, and so betrayed
The Conscience of the Universe—intoned
The litany of Nature, but her God dethroned!

A Song of Jeweled Hours

31

Oh Poet, well beloved of the Muse,
How gracious were the stars that watched thy birth!
She gave to thee her lyric harp whose strings,
Aeolian like, chant Nature's communings
Most musical, in ether high o'er Earth,
Where sings the lark, and Cloud no shadow strews,
In that serener sphere which was thy mood,
Where worldlings find no place, and Orphic comrades
brood

With other brilliant souls that madly erred
Oh eloquent casuist, though turned aside!
But not by love nor passion driven astray,
Nor fierce ambition,—thy clear crystal lay
Its choral birth in intellectual pride
Conceived, that barred the great Creative Word,
Or prisoned Him in the vesture of His world,
In rock or sun or sky,—in flower and dew impearled.

His light illumines the mind but chills the heart.
We turn to other singers for relief
From doubt, and mental questionings that retard
The growth of souls, such as the Quaker Bard,
Whose simpler ballads soothe the heart of Grief,
With inspiration for Life's sadder part,
Drawn from the shrine of Service, understood
By one who walks with God and feeds on angel food.

No gifts to him gave the Parnassian Nine,
Nor e'er of Castaly's springs his lips had drank;
But his own Country's Muse inspired his song

A Song of Jeweled Hours

To strenuous strains, attacking vested wrong,
The genius of New England, from the bank
Of Merrimack, where she had built her shrine
Where opes the violet first—the eye of Spring
Arose to crown her poet and to bid him sing!

A chain of daisies 'round her head was wreathed,
Her arms filled high with sheaves of golden rod,
And in her lustrous eyes the wistful grace
Of the love legends of the Red Man's race,
Whose fields of romance still her fancy trod;
But in her heart, she lived the faith bequeathed
By mystic ancestors. Her laureate limned
The charms of native homes and Christian living
hymned.

And Bryant, in his grand simplicity,
An antique Roman, e'er supremely sane!
True poet, journalist, first citizen—
Respected e'en in soulless Mammon's den.
Oh, all too little his infrequent strain!
Who sang his native landscape, and the sea,
The Prairie, and the Forest, and the Power
Who guides the wild bird's flight, and his, in Death's
dark hour.

Twin with the other silver bearded singer,
Who charmed the generations of my Youth,
The Bard of Sentiment and Scholarship,
Whose blameless life was one wind favored trip.

Around the Happy Islands. He, in sooth,
 Found Fortune was no noble jade, whose finger
 Caressed him first, then strangled, but always
 Gave fortune, fame, and friends, and health and length
 of days.

He was a gleaner in the world's wide field,
 Who took the gold and gems of other men,
 And made a rare mosaic, with the touch
 Of master artists, so exquisitely such.
 We loved his pictures—sea, and shore, and fen,
 And still life scenes, to him a fairy yield
 Of Puritan firesides, else a dreary place,
 Aglow with light and love through his transfiguring
 grace.

He chose the cloistered walks where students tread,
 The atmosphere of ancient books he breathed,
 Which gave an Old World grace to New World
 themes,
 And versatile,—the gloomy Tuscan's dreams
 Interpreted for us, and likewise wreathed
 The legends of the Indian, forest bred,
 Into a saga, by which we suspire
 The odorous pines and hemlocks at our library fires.

I've walked the lawns he tended, gazing down
 The tranquil Charles, and its world famous bridge,
 And as its tide flowed noiselessly along,
 I've mused upon the Master and his song,
 And watched the moon rise o'er a cloudy ridge,

A Song of Jeweled Hours

To flood with silver light the silent town.
And such the witchery of the place and hour,
The magic of his verse had sacramental power.

To soothe the restless spirit, and to place
A finger on the lips of wild complaint,
To spiritualize the selfishness of Grief,
And purge Ambition, 'till it finds its chief
And better purpose is, no stoic saint,
But warm with feeling for another's case,
To spend whatever superior gift possessed,
To champion the poor, the wounded, the oppressed.

Pilgrim! if e'er thy wandering steps incline
To Cambridge, seek to see the ancient house
Where in the room where Washington once stood
As at an altar stand, the pure and good
The Singer wedded for his Muse's spouse.
The room remains the same, his books still shine
In rows placed by his hand, his pictures, all
Of Culture that he loved, are there on floor and wall.

I've stood within the study and invoked
The phantoms of his friends and daily guests;
Again the lamps seemed lighted, and elate
The hospitable flames leaped in the grate;
And to the mind again their file invests
The chamber where they eat and sang and joked
And grandly argued Beauty, Virtue, Truth—
I turned, and all were gone, even as my star-led Youth.

Among them Lowell stood as oft of old
With Dante's deathless scroll clasped in his hand:
Our Muses' most capricious son and bold
Who fused into the walls of purest gold
The fool's pyrites, scintillating sand,
In wantonness as by no law controlled,
Or, as to show with what indifferent ware,
He could build splendid structures palace-like and fair!

He played on various instruments—anon
An organ tone, orchestral, deep and grand,
Then dying to an echo, as the mood
Of different subjects differently wooed
His sympathetic soul. If feebly planned,
The inspiration from his theme was gone,
The music languished, and the bard could pay
A doubtful compliment, and mediocre lay.

The full, rich diapason of his song—
The deathless anthem to commemorate
With blissful adorations that outran
All tears, the splendors of the kingliest man
That ever perished at the helm of State,
Or tuned to humbler keys to pillory wrong,
The politician's venal heart dissect,
And be the Bion of New England's dialect.

As many sided as the prism of glass,
That cuts the white rays of the sun between
Its knife, like angles into flowers of light,
He seemed a prophet with true second sight;

A Song of Jeweled Hours

A critic now, intuitively keen,
A wit, whose words with wholesome laughter pass,
Cavalier, Puritan, orator, diplomat—
And citizen of the world—American at that!

Just one more name to end the long review :
The smiling Autocrat deserves our praise,
The radiant dandy in the Muses' court;
Thy page, Apollo,—loving to resort
To Beacon Street salons and social ways,
A daintier Praed, (comparisons to pursue),
A sweeter Locker, singing to a harp,
That laughed away the cares that make Life's burdens
sharp.

The mantle of the earlier Georgians fell
Upon him in a measure as he wrote
His Club addresses, after dinner rhymes,
In epigram and proverb for the times,
With here and there a clear, original note,
So quaintly wise, so humorous his spell.
We love the singer of the cheerful day,
And could not wish to change the temper of his lay.

All these bequeathed some tangible gifts to men
Who follow after,—others left no trace
Who moved my youth to smiles, or tears, or filled
With wrath, or emulation, as they willed :—
The Lords of Mimicry! whose mobile face
And vibrant voice and graceful gesture, when

They trod their stage enthralled. Death's curtain
falls!
Lo, shape nor voice remains in the deserted halls!

Their trade in shadows and in echoes dealt,
Their eloquence died in non-recording air,—
Their fame was but the fragrance of the flower,
All dissipated in its little hour,
Or spindrift of the wave that glasses fair
The sunbow, for an instant, ere it melt
Into the raging water, with no trace
Of its rare, fragile beauty on the Ocean's face.

Who at a hundred years will speak of Booth?
Or others praise whose praise recurs to me
Melodious in the golden days now past?
Unless some Singer wreathed of Fame, will cast
A portion of his immortality
Around them, and revive their lives forsooth,—
Picture their form and genius and their name
Embalm for future days in th' amber of his fame.

Here was a man whose voice was as a chord
Of music, and whose every motion grace,
A face as classic as a Grecian god—
The Merlin of the Drama, at whose nod
The Past gave up its dead, and in the space
And action of the mimic world, restored
The Danish Prince, and Brutus living still,
Iago, Romeo, Lear—whomever he might will.

A Song of Jeweled Hours

The king of Tragedy! and yet his Art
So versatile, he could all parts portray;
Superb in Comedy, a lord of smiles,—
The rarer humor that the soul beguiles.
In sunnier moods he made the genial play
A mental recreation, while the heart
Laughed deep,—yet with the same exquisite grace
Of one who never pandered to the low or base,

But still essentially the tragic soul—
An actor, who expressed himself, and felt
All sensibility to beauteous things
That fade—the swan expiring as it sings;—
That fatal flaw in Nature, which has dealt
As Glory's utmost verge an unreach'd goal;
That spiritual hunger for the unattained,
The hectic rose with which his own clear soul was
veined.

A kin to him the men of golden lips,
The orators and pleaders of a cause,
Who brushed aside the mask of Self and fought,
For all Humanity in deed and thought,
With words like flames that warmed the World's applause,
That crowned them living; but ungrateful, strips
The wreath of Recollection from their brows
When newer champions rise, and later interests rouse.

All—actors, preachers, orators,—all, pass
Like comets shining for a golden time,

Then fade away into the outer dark
Of drear Oblivion, without gleam or spark
To bring to mind the glory of their prime.
The wise, the witty, but a song, alas!
That for a moment charms with glad surprise,
And then in silence hushed, obliterated, dies.

But Youth, so opulent in present joy,
Cannot forecast the bankruptcy of Age,
Nor realize that in its fragrance flung,
Like burning incense from a censer swung,
The soul is passing,—that the elements wage
Unceasing warfare, finally to destroy
Its tenement. And lo, our Youth is past,
And ere we note the dying flower, comes Winter's blast!

Decay and change are woven in the woof
Of this material world,—they form the web
Of Time and Space and map their full design.
The stars are wasting even as they shine,
The crystal river shrinks with every ebb,
The rolling globe, the sky that forms its roof,
Are all the slaves of Mutability—
Th' impersonal god who holds the Universe in fee!

All heaven and earth seem one stupendous whirl,
The panorama of eternal change,—
And though we view the crescent with delight
Grow nightly large into the perfect Night,
And Hope, when icy blasts of Winter range,

A Song of Jeweled Hours

Sees the Spring change and flags of green unfurl,
Foreboding still, the lips of Science say,
"Each lovely cheek of Change—the hectic of Decay!"

I saw as you may see where England's pulse
Beats rhythmic with the roar of London town,
The rock graved picture of the Assyrian King,
His queen enthroned before him banquetting,
And lo! the night of ages has come down,
And war and drought and lightning that convulse
The mightiest empires, have made wreck of his,
And hurled his conqueror's conqueror even to the abyss.

Ah, from that far off golden afternoon,
When they sat dallying by their palace walls,
To this, what nations rose in many a clime
To power colossal and defying Time!
Now desert sands choke their judicial halls,
Their million trodden streets, a vast lagoon
Now floods, and these but prophesy the end,
With which all that are now, eventually must blend.

From small beginnings to th' acme of power,
And then reverting to the darkness drear,
As if this were Art's, Culture's destined close—
The primal barbarism from whence it rose:
As nations, so a world—sphere after sphere,
If we may trust the telescope, their dower,
The voiceless ruin of a lifeless void,
The charnel house of Space, revolving though destroyed.

A Song of Jeweled Hours

41

Yet this tremendous spectacle on the stage,
Whose theatre is the universe, seems less
Than one poor human spirit facing Death.
Is this the ending? After parted breath,
Is there eternal sleep and nothingness?
The mother heart, the wisdom of old age,
The good, the true, the gentle, more than stars—
Are they extinct, when Death their physical semblance
mars?

The star led Keppler, who by thought conceived
The secret of the planets, England's knight,
Who 'neath his orchard trees by reasoning saw
The formula of Matter's basic law
That binds the constellations by its might,
And Shakespeare's matchless genius, that ensheaved
The wit and wisdom of all centuries,—
Has Earth's decay the power to quench the soul of
these?

Oh deep, pathetic thirst of human hearts!
That cannot circumscribe within the span
Of mortal life, its longings and desires,
Or its attainments, but the more aspires
The nobler its ambition,—while the man
Of upright walk who feels Misfortune's darts,
And sees the base exalted, feels it is
The recompense of Law—the higher life than this.

Whereof One speaks and cries—"If any thirst
Lo! let him come to Me and drink." And lo!

A Song of Jeweled Hours

A many millioned choir of voices rise,
His witnesses, to certify Him wise
And true—From beds of suffering, scenes of woe,
From mansions grand, and prison cells accurst,
The learned, th' illiterate, slave and the unpriced,
From all Earth's corners come to magnify the Christ!

Lord of immortal Youth and Age undimmed!
He came the flower of Hebrew prophecies,
Whom ancient type and ritual displayed,
The World's Desire, for whom the nations prayed,
The Answer to the prayer of Socrates,
The Christ, whom Roman Virgil's verses hymned,
Unconscious of their spiritual meaning sooth.
Behold the Eternal God wears Man's eternal Youth!

Shine sacred Star whose light outshines the sun,
Lead to the Babe in Bethlehem's hallowed stall!
He ran through all Life's stages up to man,
A stainless soul whom Nature could not ban—
He conquered her, retrieving Adam's fall,
Of human excellence the paragon!
Interpreting the thoughts of God to man,
Then suffering for their weal the death none can again!

With whom will ye compare the Christ? The light
Of twenty analytic centuries
Has flashed upon His life in hate or love,
And still He shines, the flawless gem above

All others,—Boodh, Confucius, Socrates,
Who have given creeds to men in Nature's night,
That even His foes have glorified His deeds
And cried Centurion like "This Man from God proceeds!"

The grandest souls are circumscribed by race
And dwarfed to local heroes, seer and sage,
Whose proper praise the world delights to pay,
Are cramped by limitations of their day,
But Christ is universal. On the page
Wherein His rare, unsullied life we trace,
He moves th' Exemplar of each age and clime,
Star of the Occident! the Orient Sun sublime!

He only has the words of endless life,
He has the grace of deathless youth, which we,
Whose eyes are fixed upon the westering sun
Know is alone the heart of Joy, for dun
The night of age comes down upon us, and dree
Life, day by day, loses the zest of strife,
The fire of Passion, first a living flame,
To ashes burns and turns a memory and a name.

Ne'er Nature Man's rejuvenation brings,
No miracle of the Phoenix,—once, they say,
An occult bird blown from mysterious isles,
And twice, in each millennium to the piles
Of golden Heliopolis, then away
To far Arabia, where it flapped its wings,

A Song of Jeweled Hours

Till flames burst flower-like forth, and from its breast
A newer body sprang, as from another nest.

But lo! the Holy Grail! that jewelled cup
Whose sacred Blood transcends all Nature's powers,
That cleans the stain of Adam and the wreck
Of our mortality, and leaves no speck
Of imperfection in those heavenly bowers,
Where those who of the precious chalice sup,
Find daedal fields of changeless Youth and Life,
Beyond the touch of Time or Sorrow or of Strife!

Not always Youth thus apprehends the light,
Some films of inexperience blur the eye;
As one, who tries the telescope at first,
Sees all the skies in novel radiance burst
And, wonder stricken, notes some star on high,
And dreams a planet shines before his eye
Which is a stellar light of less degree.
But, oh Lord God, that Shelley's soul could rail at
Thee!

My Youth, too, heard melodious voices ring
That ravished my rapt soul with wondrous song.
When Beauty first the youthful votary greets
She lures him with the heresy of Keats,
And feeding him with lotus, leads along
The hidden reefs, whereby the Syrens sing,
Whose sunlit waves wash o'er a precipice
More perilous than Sylla or fierce Charybdis.

Can one feed Hunger with the breath of flowers?
Or with pale moonshine quench the pang of Thirst?
The hour will surely in its chariot roll
To bear from all of Earth the parting soul.
The firm blue columns of the Heavens will burst,
And, light as gossamer, Earth's rock ribbed towers
Dissolve; where then shall it find resting place
The reft undying spirit, in cold voids of space?

Something within, that is not satisfied
With that sweet Music that delights the ear,
With that bright glory that allures the eye—
The hues and forms of Beauty—makes a cry,
The Baby's cry of loneliness and fear
When left alone at Winter eventide,
Th' eternal hunger of Humanity
That craves the living God until Christ's face we see.

Lo! to the questions of the World He speaks,
And soothes the hearts that marvel at the Past,
Its prayers unanswered, hopes ungratified,
The urgent needs of Pain that were denied;
Where Death, capricious, was allowed to blast
The rose just blooming on the infant's cheek,
Yet left old age, that joyously would doff
Its impotence, a withered stalk for Time to scoff.

Aye, He will come to end the peasant's moil,
To conquer the coercive power of Wealth
Against the law of Nature, that makes free

A Song of Jeweled Hours

The privilege of the gifts of Earth and Sea
To every man, and rights of Life and Health,
And make proportionate reward of Toil,
And, judging in His righteousness, set free
The soul of man to its diviner liberty!

The Queen of the Islands

THE QUEEN OF THE ISLANDS

CANTO FIRST

Dark purple curves of the foam-flecked, wave-ribbed,
 sea,

Dash on the lone, white beach with a resonant, musical
 glee;

And the limp, ribboned grasses, wet with the spray of
 the wave,

Tangle the wild waste bloom aflower on her grave,
Where the languorous butterflies myriad-eyed

 Float and sip with Sybarite ease,

While the tireless winged osprey follows the rhythmic
 tide,

In those shining alien seas,

Northward and southward as far as the strained eye
 reaches.

She whose life was a brief sweet summer of Love,
Hath walked where the silvery path of the luminous
 beach is,

And now the blown sands are shifting and drifting
 above

The place, where in radiant beauty she fearlessly trod.

But no white stone erected there,

 Tells of the clay that 'neath the sod,

Was once a form as bright and fair

 As ever fleshed by God.

The Queen of the Islands

No tale inscribed in marble, grief,
Affection's final sole relief,
Portrays the beauty of those eyes
Ere held in Death's eterne eclipse,
Nor what inestimable prize,
Men saw in her ripe lips.
For once at festival and ball,
She was the queenliest form of all.
Brave men were spellbound by her glance,
And suppliants for her hand in dance.
But oh! in gems and laces dressed,
With ripe red roses on her breast,
Her charms must not be sung, but guessed!

But mine—it is the doleful strain,
Such youth and beauty all in vain,
By Love allured, betrayed, and slain.
Oh death in Youth, as I rehearse
Her life, it almost seems at times,
That Youth is oft the greatest curse,
And loving, oft the worst of crimes.
Alas! how very close they dwell
To Love, the coasts of heaven and hell,
Like cliffs, which scarce a step divides;
One scarred, and bleak, and lightning rent,
A drear inhospitable ascent;
The other, down a streamlet glides,
And carpeted with moss and flowers,
Invites to sweet luxurious hours
That flit in dreamy rapture by,
Like white clouds in a sunny sky!

They met at opera and ball
Which first I cannot now recall.
Enough for him that she was fair,
And he,—he had that dashing air

She read of gallants in Romance;
And grace,—oh call him debonnair,—

The neatest waltzer in the dance,
Small hands, jet curls and eyes of flame,
A pose the gods of old might claim;
A voice that thrilled her beating heart
And gave Love's bow its keenest dart;
And then, Othello-like, he told
Such traveler's tales of prowess bold,
She hung with breathless interest on
The accents of her paragon,
And clothed him with the ideal grace
That eyes of Love alone could trace.
And she, who had been till that hour
As passionless as some white flower,
Like buds, new opened by the sun,
Felt Love's electric current run
Through' every pulse that throbbed her being—
All breathing, thinking, feeling, seeing—
And ripened her who lately stood
A child, to perfect womanhood.
The angels envy it above,—
A virgin's first and only love!

Oh Love, young Love, the charm alone
Of Adam's paradise is thine!
The joy of joy he hath not known

The Queen of the Islands

Who hath not found thee all divine.
He hath not lived, or breathes in vain,
Who ne'er hath felt thy amorous pain
Through his vibrating pulses stealing,—
New hope, new joy, new life, revealing.
The sun by day, the stars by night,
For thee shine with a brighter light.
The wave, the sky it mirrors, too,
Spread out with a diviner blue.
The light-hung leaves, the conscious flowers
Are love-thrilled in the forest bowers;
But when fond heart beats close to heart,
Earth, heaven, hell, are things apart.
There is no past, no future—now
Is all their raptured thoughts allow.
With heaven in the clinging kiss,
The close embrace, the conscious flesh,
The quickening breath, clasped hands,—I wis
When this old Earth was young and fresh,
That Adam ceased, indeed, to grieve,
If by a thought of Eden crossed,
And whispered to enraptured Eve,
“It was a world well lost.”

She was an orphan—born co-heir
To Wealth, bequeathed a guardian's care;
Of further kin she was bereft
Save one,—an older brother left
With her a fine estate to share.
But Neville was estranged from her
By distance, life, and character,

His tutors, and his college days,
Had swerved their lives in different ways.
They parted children, chilled with tears,
In thinking of the severing years—
But ranked, long ere they met again,
With women, she, and he, with men;
And when again they saw each other,
She marveled if to kiss her brother;
And to her lips he offered his,
In a perfunctionary kiss.
And yet it pleased his natural pride,
When men debated charms, to hear
His sister's beauty, far and near,
Acknowledged, praised, and deified.
And she exulted in the fame
That gathered 'round her brother name:
His record at the college oar,
The several medals that he wore;
And though pride grew a fairer growth,
It was a feeling, not beyond
A fond regard, and still, with both,
Of each more proud than fond.

But now Love's hour had taught her more
Than ten long years had done before;
For her, the ball had lost its charm,
Except to hold her lover's arm;
And wanting him, the tardy day
In lone impatience crept away;
For absence, is to Love as Death,
Except that after mortal breath,

The Queen of the Islands

We cannot meet as we have met.
And none can tell what changes wait
In that unknown, eternal state,
Which hearts of flesh would here regret.

But nightly, clasping hand in hand,
They strolled along the glistening sand,
Or hidden from Intrusion's reach
Sat on the wave kissed beach.
Alone—that perfect heaven of love,
With nothing to distract or mar,
The interminable sky, above,
Aglow with many a star,
The interminable sea, around,
Its lapping waves, the loyal bound
Of the charmed world in which they dwelt.
What song can sing the joy they felt?
When just to feel heart throb 'gainst heart,
To feel Love's warm breath on the face,
To stroke love's hair, to stand apart
For breath, to kiss and to embrace
His pillowed head on her soft breast,
Were rapture never yet expressed.
Oh, even heaven can hardly be
A place of deeper ecstasy!
So fled a rapturous July.
Alas! how fast such moments fly.

'Twas night in August's glorious prime.
Muriel sat in her boudoir
And watched the clouds of twilight climb

High o'er the evening star.
The room was one she loved the best,
And suited well to such a guest,
No paper on the walls was hung,
But purple plush that lightly swung,
 When through the lattice stealing
The breezes from the honey bowers
Swept laden with the breath of flowers,
 From inlaid floor to ceiling.
A scented fountain, banked with bloom,
Stood in the centre of the room;
Luxurious chairs, in satin lined,
A soft divan, where she reclined
In dishabille, her robe of white
Of silk and lace scarce hid from sight
Her shoulders, bare and white as milk,
Save where the veins, like blue threads of silk
Ran o'er them toward each ivory globe
Lace cinctured, and beneath her robe,
Her feet peeped forth like shining snow,
Or marble sculptured long ago.

The dew fell chill, the hour was late,
And yet she by the oriel sate;
For o'er her soul gloomed dark and chill,
A vague presentiment of ill.
Long had she sought to find repose,
But all in vain, her dark eyes close
Their weary lids, the gates of sleep,
Refused the drowsy god to keep,
While o'er her hung the shadowy weight,

The Queen of the Islands

The forecast, as she feared, of Fate.
A casual eye at length she turned
To where Heaven's host of watchfires burned,
When like a torch flung from the height,
She saw a shot star fade in night.
"The stars," she murmured, "in the sky
Betoken sorrow from on high!"

A moment scarce had passed, since she
Pronounced the dismal augury,
When leaping through the casement lightly,
And hatless, spotted, too, with blood,
Beside her couch her lover stood.
And in the moonlight, shining brightly,
She saw him place his finger tips
Adjuring silence on his lips.
"Nay, love, be not alarmed," he cried,
"Though in this reeking guise you see
One who must ere the change of tide,
Be far from love and thee.
Oh, but for this I did not dare
To trespass on your privacy,
Save that I was too well aware,
We cannot meet when once I flee."

"We cannot meet!"—the blush of shame,
That crimsoning o'er her forehead came,
Was blanched as white as palsied fear,
As this dread message smote her ear.
"Alas, I've feared an hour like this!
For surely, Heaven never yet,

Gave mortals such a perfect bliss,

As we have shared since first we met!

Yet why did Heaven allow the stroke!

For every morning, as I woke,

I asked me, 'Is it, is it real?'

And doubting, 'Am I loved alone?'

And just as I began to feel

That you, in sooth, were all my own,

You come with such a tale as this,

And poison every spring of bliss.

Oh, if your love was wholly feigned,

The pastime of an idle hour,

And my affection is disdained,

Because my peace is in your power,

Grant me this boon before we part:

To send to death this trusting heart,

That gave you power to curse or bless,

But throbbed but for your happiness.

Aye, gave you all that ere was given

By woman, even the hope of heaven!

In mercy, slay then ere you fly,

And I will bless you as I die."

He moved within the moon's broad glare,

And stood between her and the light;

And brushing wide his matted hair,

A clotted wound displayed to sight.

"Forgive me," sobbed she softly crying,

"I chide you while you perhaps are dying."

Her bare white arms she threw around

His form, and fondly kissed the wound;

The Queen of the Islands

But he unclasped the rapt embrace,
And sought a less conspicuous place.
"Nay, fear not death from this," he said,
"The man whose indecisive hand
Gave me this wound, lies stiff and dead
Upon the salt sea sand.
He swore we never should be wed,
And when I laughed his word to scorn,
Vile taunts and charges foul he made,
Not easy to be borne.
And when his gibe I calmly stood,
Because I would not shed his blood,
He dogged my footsteps, till to-night
He found me by the sea, alone,
And forced me, in the desperate fight,
To take his life or lose my own.
Oh love, acquit me of the blame
And ask not, ask me not, his name.
But the discovering Morn is near,
I cannot, must not, tarry here!
'Twere death to me, and shame to thee!
Farewell, dear love, I must to sea,
Behold my ship—it waits for me."

She looked across the waning night,
And saw the sailor's beckoning light.
"Wait love," she answered, "what to me
Is shame, or death, or aught but thee?
Aye, let the tongue of scandal move
The vampire of a woman's fame!
What care I, if I have thy love,

And thou dost cherish me the same.
Nor false to virtue shall I be,
But true to love and true to thee.
What woman could of virtue boast,
Of virtue worthy of the name,
If, when love needed her the most,
She fled for fear of shame.
Nay, grant me time my dress to change,
And where you go I too will range,
And share your fate whate'er it be,
To Earth's most drear extremity."

He clasped her fiercely to his breast.
"Dear love," he said, "thus ever rest."
Continuing "I indeed am thine,
As fully as your pledge is mine;
Then haste together let us flee,
And once upon the trackless sea,
I know where a fair island lies,
Where love may find a paradise;
For lapped by unfrequented seas,
There is no sorrow nor disease,
A fairy waste of flowers and trees,
Where buds and butterflies and bees
Mar not great Nature's loving plan,
In groves all unprofaned by man.
There blessed with all that love can give,
In that fair Eden shall we live,
There by the distant world unknown,
Live for each other's love alone."

Twice seven nights across the sea

They fled, when at the fortnight's dawn,
The sweet land-breeze was seaward borne,
Like siren breaths in dreams of Ease;
But where is he, the vessel's lord,
And the sweet bride he brought aboard?
In vain the seamen seek their face,
In vain they call, there is no trace,
No more than if the 'whelming deep
Should o'er their sinking bodies sweep.
A lifeboat, missing, too, since dawn,
Betrays the aid by which they've gone;
And the good ship sailed on:
To other shores, to other ports,
More populous where trade resorts,
And left the fugitives' fate to be
Another mystery of the sea.

But not to us—propitious Fate

Smiled o'er their daring flight;
And ere the hushed descent of star-clothed Night,
Their dripping oar-blades grate
Upon a beach, that sheening lies
One of a score of isles, washed by these distant seas,
Where undisturbed by man, the seabird cries
Unto his mate, and nests among the trees;
Where luscious fruits of the Hesperides,
In this neglected Paradise,
Have been the gorgeous sunbird's prey,
Until this Adam with his trusting Eve,
The busy outside world behind them leave

Upon Love's pilgrim way.
Reversed in Fate to him of old,
Who lost an Eden by his love,
This modern Adam, quite as bold,
Found his, within the myrtle grove.

CANTO SECOND

Thoughtful as one who, perchance, for his life, might
with Nature yet wrestle,
Arms and the artisan's tools he had stored and removed
from the vessel.
So in a virginal grove, on the edge of the tree-guarded
highlands,
Built he a love bower and crowned her with blossoms
the Queen of the Islands.
Floored it with sweet scented woods, and the sides of
the roof of the chamber,
Over the windows and doorways, bright red-berried
vines taught to clamber.
Fish, every morning he caught her, and shell-fish
brought fresh from the sea-shore,
Eggs, and the young of the seabird, captured with nets
from the lee-shore;
Sentinel trees by their dwelling provided them nuts and
bananas,
Maize and a species of yam, he discovered wild grown
in savannas.
Bright rose the sun in the morning and brightly he sank
o'er the billow,—

Life to them both seemed as fair as the cloud-curtains
fringing his pillow.

But gradually to Muriel,
There came a change most sad to see.
It was not Love's satiety,
Nor that she was not loved as well;
It was not fear, nor sadder yet,
Useless remorse, or vain regret.
But o'er her spirit, seemed to roll
That awful sickness of the soul,
For which by the stern law of Fate,
There is no cure or opiate.
Her lover saw with boding heart
How, day by day, the dying rose
Grew paler on her cheeks, as those
By awful sorrow set apart
For heaven, and an early death.
Then feebler came and went her breath,
As perfume, dying with the flower,
But loveliest in her mortal hour.
Her eye, so spiritually bright,
And shining with the heavenly light,
That with the smile her features wore,
She seemed of heaven, long before
Her chastened spirit took its flight,
To regions of eternal light.
She made no murmur or complaint,
But suffered as the gentlest saint,
Whom God, in every ebbing breath,
Is kissing slowly into death.

The only care with which she grieved,
For him so soon to be bereaved.
All else of earth had ceased to move
Her interest, or awake her love.
The flowers she used to tend, her eye
Now passed indifferently by;
The fawn whom she was wont to stroke,
No recognition now awoke;
But he for whom she dared all shame,
Alone, 'twixt her and heaven came.

“It is not that I love you less,
“Dear heart,” she said, “because I die;
But oh, the heavy thoughts that press
Upon me when you are not nigh!
This body is too weak to bear
The dread weight of its soul sick care.
Oh 'tis not in a man to guess
A woman's heart of weariness,
To long to rest your arms within,
Yet doubt if Heaven counts it sin
To nestle on your breast to sleep,
Yet in my very dreams, to weep
Lest God should view with frowning eye,
And scorn me for unchastity.
To feel of all my childhood's friends,
Not one will judge my course aright,
Or think, but for unworthy ends
I joined you in your flight.
To know that everywhere my name,

The Queen of the Islands

A by-word is for woman's shame.
Oh though your love far, far transcends
The world's esteem, the love of friends,
Yet, ever when I am alone,
My cowed heart hears an undertone;
And sharper than a fatal spear,
The words of calumny reach my ear.
Oh nothing can avert my doom,
Nor give me rest save in the tomb."

So gently and unselfishly,
Upon a sweet day's fitting eve,
While lingering in the upper sky,
Th' enamored sun seemed loath to leave.
Even as the twilight's fading ray,
Her loving spirit fled away.
Alas Bereaved! the flower you see
Beloved by her, since culled by thee,
Are longer lived than she!
What boots for stricken grief, to hold
The long, white hand, so limp and cold,
Or lips bereaved on lips to press,
That feel not, know not, Love's caress!
Oh go, before the morning light
And hide your dead from Nature's sight.
To her belongs the gladsome sky,
The careless flowers that mock the eye,
The birds that flit in full song by,
The odorous trees, the frolicsome deep,
That ever smile howe'er men weep!

And he, in after days again,
Was seen among his fellow men.
Unknown his past, though some strange tale
Of rescue, from a desert isle,
By some wind-buffeted, straying sail,
Made the wise sceptics smile.
But still a man of solitude,
Or if his alien steps intrude
The scenes of gay frivolity,
His presence bade their pleasure flee.
Even at the Club, when he attends
He told no tales, and sought no friends;
And more than half his year was spent
Self exiled on the Continent.

Time passed, and with it died remark
At the sad Sphinx of Clubs—none joked
The silent man who sat and smoked,
Or drank his cocktail after dark,
And left there with a quiet nod,
As to his hermitage he trod;
For thus a nine-days' wondering
Becomes at last the usual thing.
Till, once vouched by a member's name,
A stranger to the club room came,
And startled, stood as half bespelled
At whom his wondering eyes beheld:
Then from them glanced a flash of fire
Of vicious anger, mad desire,
While from the startled clubman's eyes
A look shot forth of glad surprise.

The Queen of the Islands

"And art thou living," he exclaimed,
"Thank God! I then shall die unblamed!"
While from the stranger "Now, at last,
I shall have vengeance for the Past.
Seducer and abductor, too,
This is the day of Fate for you!
My sister, tell me where is she?
A boy once stood before your wrath,—
You left him dying in your path,
It is a man now asks of thee,
With soul to dare and arm with strength
To strike for his revenge at length."

The other answered courteously,
"At a fit time, if thou wilt waive
The present, I will answer thee
The satisfaction thou dost crave.
These gentlemen can hardly feel
So interested in our weal
As to forgive us the disgrace
To make their rooms a brawling place."

"Nay, answer now," the stranger cried,
"Let them our grounds of strife decide.
My sister, tell me, where is she?
A brother asks, demands, of thee."

Again he said "I cannot bear
To here unveil the wounds I wear,
Nor to the careless public cast
The sacred legacy of the Past.
Another time, a fitter place."

"Perhaps this, if you can feel disgrace,
Will change your feelings in the case,"
And Neville smote him in the face.

Continuing, "Here, behold my card!

I pledge to thee the satisfaction
Of gentlemen for this—an action;
That but for just cause were debarred,
If you are not too great a coward
To ask it, for the insults showered
Upon you, vile abductor, cur,
And perhaps of her, the murderer!"

The exile's cheeks flushed with the flame
Of sudden anger, and of shame.
Then white as with great strength of will,
He held in leash his temper still,
And answered quietly—"I'll send
With due authority, a friend
To-morrow, seeking from your hand
Th' atonement Honor must demand.
Bear witness, I sought not thy hurt,
But strove th' extremity to avert;
Thou would'st not have it so,—if shed,
The guilty blood be on thy head.
And so I wish you all 'Good Night.'"
Then rising, disappeared from sight.

The morrow dawned—a lovely day,
With grace to awe the lust to slay;
And yet near by the town, where stood
The remnant of an ancient wood,

The Queen of the Islands

Encircled by its guarding trees,
Whose murmuring leaves breathed vows of peace,
The two combatants, fully armed
With deadly weapons, stood uncharmed,
Though Nature's every sight and voice
Proclaimed the evil of their choice:
The laughing sky, the insect life,
With sweet suggestions, praising Life,
And songs of birds and wild flowers breath,—
They only, madly, thought of Death.

Some sense of this the seconds felt,
And strove their obdurate hearts to melt.
Th' insulted e'en agreed to be
Appeased by an apology;
But the aggressor turned to state
That blood alone could slake his hate,
And added, too, such taunt and scoff,
The seconds' words of peace were banned,
They could not call the duel off,
But measured each his spot to stand.

The enemies then took their place,
And turned a moment face to face,
With upraised pistols waiting there
Until the echoing air should bear
The fateful count, whose final word
The death of one or both incurred.
The brother shot, the bullet sped
And barely missed his foeman's head.
His keen desire, his hate's wild flame

Deflected, perhaps, his accurate aim.
An oath he muttered 'neath his breath,
Then bravely faced, expected death.

The other with his pistol held
Still firm, no bolt of fate impelled,—
“ I love the memory of my wife
Too well, to take her brother's life,”
He said, “ I believe her prayer in bliss
Has caused his murderous tube to miss,
And now that I have proven here
I am no bondman unto fear,
His life is mine,—that life I spare ! ”
And fired his shot into the air.
“ A humming bird just hovered there
To sip that shattered flower,” he said,
“ To prove how well my bullet sped,
Investigate and find it dead.”

A tiny, headless thing it was,
A shimmering opal on the grass,
Now golden green, now ruby flame,
That proved how true his nerve and aim.

Two men, two friends inseparable,
Who share Life's pleasures and Life's ill.
Oh, blest is Friendship everywhere !
Life's cordial in a world of care,
But blest indeed whene'er it grows
Between two souls that once were foes !

The Queen of the Islands

The feud that parted them allayed,
The keystone of its arch is made,
And naked soul to soul displayed
Binds like the magnet to the ore
That can be separate no more.
So these were linked and firmly held,
By one devotion that dispelled
All doubt and fear and selfishness,
And more indulged, grew more to bless;
And that devotion was the love
They bore the sainted one above,
Who dying in her beauty's bloom,
Ere Age one youthful charm had harmed,
Still shone to Memory o'er her tomb,
With all her loveliness embalmed.
Like some fair star that to the eye
Shines changeless in the evening sky,
Their greatest joy in mind to trace
The memory of her grace and face,
To live in amity and troth,
Such as would please her gentle heart,
Who living truly loved them both
And grieved because they were apart.
True friendship where no jealousy,
Nor envious thought could ever be.
And which the years in passing round
With closer ties more closely bound,
To which the living hope was given,
Of rapt reunion all in Heaven!

The Bride of Bar-Cocab



THE BRIDE OF BAR-COCAB

CANTO FIRST

Groves of figs and olive wood,
Growing where Bithera stood
Overshadowed by the fanes
Of Jerusalem's higher plains—
Once a fortress, which along
Hills then refluxed with song,
Held the mightiest patriot band
Israel could to arms command,
Since the Roman laid the shrine
Low in ashes, though divine.
Further, semi-circling high,
Moab's mountains bound the eye,
Forming, blue, with cloud caps fleeced,
The horizon of the East.
Nearer in their shadow seen,
Drifts the desert bleak between;
Westward when the eye has passed
Of uneven hills, the last
Slopes the land, once white with grain,
In a long descending plain,
Gently to that tideless sea
Which has e'er refused to be
Subject for a single hour
To the moon's magnetic power,

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

Though in all the world beside
She is mistress of the tide.

Whate'er spot on God's green Earth
Gives a noble action birth,
Where it e'er has glistened red
With the blood for Freedom shed,
It is holy and divine,
Sacred as a haunted shrine.
Poets should its glory sing,
History with its praises ring,—
Yet Bitthera is a word
Which of you have ever heard?
Although there a conquered race
Sold to slavery and disgrace,
Crushed by chains of weary years,
Vassal life and exile tears,
Still to heroism woke,
Chafing e'er beneath, the yoke.
Faltering Freedom, loth to flee
The clime of her nativity,
Tarried there in hearts of flame,
Till the final rally came—
On that very field arrayed,
There the fond attempt was made,
Yet the vandalism of Time,
Famine's dearth and despot's crime
Have not left a vestige there
Of their courage or despair.
E'en tradition lingers not
In the poor neglected spot

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

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To inspire my feeble verse,
Half its glory to rehearse.

Still I see through mists of Time
Something of the scene sublime,
Though the pagan Roman's horde
Strove with his victorious sword
To erase the memory
Of the fallen though the free.
Though the Moslem who to-day
Holds their ancient home his prey,
Cannot feel that Patriotism
Ever is a hallowed chrism,
Still each high and worthy deed
Harvests an immortal seed,
Which will surely find the hour
When 'twill blossom into flower,
Or if Earth denies it sod,
'Twill bloom around the throne of God!

Eve is near,—Day lingering still
Trails in beauty o'er the hill,
To dispel with lovelier light
Half the darkness of the night.
Soft the twilight breeze is sprung,
Rustling leaves but lightly sung,—
Wafting as it flies along
Incense from the wild-grown flowers,
Echoing the bird's last song.
Floating through the woody bowers,
Dew is fallen on bud and leaf

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

Fairer in their mimic grief,
While the mellow moon is bright
With no cloud to veil its light,
And the stars on Heaven's coast
Silently array their host;
Twinkling still, each unto each,
Such high thoughts as baffle speech,
Shining softness o'er the hour.
Oh, who has loved nor felt its power!

In a bower, by sheltering trees,
Veiled from bold Intrusion's gaze,
Strange the sight my vision sees—
A man and woman—through the haze,
He, of sad upbraiding face,
She, a form of winsome grace,
Like a Dryad of the place!
Far they've left behind I ween
Every dear familiar scene,
Else there had not been the sweat
Which the charger's flank has wet—
That tied near for instant aid,
Crops at ease the grassy glade,
Yet so strongly limbed, at need
Well would prove a thing of speed.

Lo, an open helmet now,
Near them, as they sit, I see,
As if turned oppressive, he
Had removed it from his brow.
By a shining coat of mail

Snugly is his breast embraced,
And the moonlight glitters pale
On the greaves, too, tightly laced
That are 'round his legs arrayed.
By his helmet, too, are laid
Spanish swords of finest blade,
While as ready for his grasp
A pilum, such as Romans clasp;
But, in sooth, all seem alien
At such a time, in such a scene.

But not alone in garb I trace
Lack of harmony with the place.
Lo! the shade upon his face!
That despite the lady there,
Shows the shadows of despair,
Hopelessness, regret and woe.
Livid, like a blighting blow,
On his face and heaving breast
Even a passion chaos pressed!
Yet o'ercoming, chastening down
Hasty word and rising frown,
Still the gentleness of Love
Sorrow's tempest cannot move;
Though he quivered at each word
Of th' avowal he had heard,
That unto his boding seemed
The knell of all he hoped or dreamed!

Can it be that Beauty rare
Has a soul within less fair?

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

Nay, by that fair, melting eye,
Full of gracious sympathy,
Duty has her heart distrained
Of the secret it contained—
Mourning all, it had to speak;
But that dewy eye and cheek
Wore an added loveliness
In its beauty of distress!
Oh, those radiant eyes were gems!
Jewels of the sapphire's class,
And those delicate cheeks were flowers
That all roses would surpass,—
Rare, red roses on their stems,
Two, twin roses in the bowers.
Even to him, here shone a grace
More than human in her face,
Such as might a prophet limn
Of th' enraptured seraphim!

"Ruth of all my foes," he said,
"Thee I have the most to dread.
Thou hast done my heart more harm
Than the Roman power or guile.
Victory loses half its charm
Unrewarded by thy smile!
True, they say, who call thy love,
Woman! but a fickle thing
Which a fancy first can move,
Then as quickly put to wing."

"Nay my love is not estranged,
Though my early faith is changed,"

Said the lady "faithfully
Beats my heart alone for thee.
Oh, thou canst not know the pain
Of my restless soul and brain,
Ere my mind and heart and will
Half won, half rebellious still,
Made surrender to the Creed
That awakes thy bitter screed.
Darling, scoffers, as thou art,
Let its Cross subdue thy heart!"

"God of Abraham forbid
Less the sin that Israel did
In the desert when they prayed
To the idol Aaron made!
Strange the humor in my spleen,
Now to praise the Nazarene—
I, who doomed to felon's death,
Many a follower of His faith.
Urge no more, th' apostate's shame
Ne'er shall blur Bar-Cocab's fame,
Israel's God once more in grace
Will behold His chosen race.
'Tis our sins and cowardice
Bar us from the Paradise
Promised David's seed at last,
By our ancient seers forecast,
Joshua and Gideon!
May I be their worthy son!
But whatever fate be mine,
I shall never, never shrink!

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

One the life I can resign,
Should my trampled country sink
Deeper into serfdom, I
Rather in her service die,
Than to live another day
Slave unto the heathen's sway.
Come unto our tent, return,
But hide thy secret in thy breast,
Lest e'en I could not arrest
The vengeance I alone would mourn."

The lady rose irresolute,—
Leaned her head upon his breast
For a moment, shamed and mute
By her love and grief possessed.
"Dearest, oh, too dear thou art,
Let me read thine inmost heart—
Since my childhood's faith is changed,
Is thy love from me estranged?
If so, send me from thee now,
But not in words the thought avow.
I could never hear thy lips
Speak Affection's harsh eclipse!
There is a solitary place
For women of the heavenly grace,
Where I may renounce fore'er
All the outside world and care.
Thither let me go alone
Nor hear thy heart's dread altered tone,
God will guide me as I flee—
Jesu, Mary, succor me!"

Wild he rained upon her lips
 Kisses passionate and fast!—
 As the summer torrent slips
 When the Winter ice is past
 Furrowing the mountain side.
 So his love surged o'er his pride!
 "Nay the love I did avow
 Changeless was, is changeless now.
 Yet its very constancy
 Gives a deeper pang to me—
 For I dreamed thee, by my side,
 Counsellor as well as bride.
 E'er my star that led me on
 From victory to victory.
 E'er thy smile the battle won—
 And bade the fears of Sorrow flee,
 And in my prophetic ear,
 I heard the shouts of triumph near,
 Till the plastic present seemed
 Even the future that I dreamed—
 Israel in that glorious hour
 Had resumed her regal power,—
 Splendid was the time and scene,
 I her king, and thou, my queen,
 Crowned with benedictions given,
 Instruments thus blessed of Heaven "

"Oh, Bar-Cocab! surely know
 All thy dreams must end in woe,
 Fair howe'er the visions seem,
 Vainer still e'en than a dream,—

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

Small thy army at the most
To the Roman's battled host—
Even more unequal still
In their hardihood and skill.
Vain the hope of aught to be
But disaster dire to thee.
To what haven canst thou flee?
Since the world has no retreat
But dost kneel at Cæsar's feet,
Even Death—a soldier's fame—
Thee would only veil with shame,
Since though aspiration high
Nerves thy soul to win or die,
Still the world has placed her ban
On thee as an outlawed man—
As a brigand chief indeed,
Whose sole aim is lust of greed,
And its stigma brands thee, still
Ignorant of thy nobler will."

"That my men are outlaws—true,
So defamed by serfs of Rome—
Yet they only seek their due.

From the spoilers of their home,
Driven in exile from their land,
Clasping ne'er a friendly hand.
And the soil they lend to-day
Perhaps to-morrow rends away
Even life—the tyrant's hate,
Holds no rights inviolate.
For the Jew at any hour

Lives the prey of lawless power.
 Lower in a Roman scale
 Than the cattle of their sale.
 What care I for life or fame,
 Since this is my country's shame?—
 Oh! glance it over from this height
 'Neath the moon's unclouded light
 And feel the worship of the sight!
 See our nation's sacred fanes
 That the heathen's curse distrains!
 See the glorious fields and hills
 Which a foreign despot tills!
 Who would not with rapture bleed
 To behold our people freed,
 From his Godless power, yea die,
 With triumph in his closing eye.
 Oh! my spirit thrills to stand,
 Gazing on these holy haunts,
 Where in shrines, divinely planned
 Earth from Heaven heard response
 My disherited fatherland!
 Which shall yet God's epic be,
 Oh, e'en now seems floating there,
 Spirits in the viewless air
 Calling Israel to be free!

"Paradise even in neglect,
 Still thy widow's weeds are fair,
 Though no loving hand has decked
 For long years thy disrepair.
 Partial Nature strives to veil

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

Still, the wreck of Ruin's trail.
Like a prodigal she strews
Lavishly, and still renews
With a glad improvidence
Every gift the Earth presents.
Here the cedar and the pine,
Pomegranate, apple, vine,
Many a rill, and lake, and river,
Here their finny wealth deliver,
Many a mountain here divides
Riches bulging from its sides,
Many a valley's arable charms
Fertile as a world of farms,
Many a grassy plain here girds
Pastures for a thousand herds,
Many a forest rich in birds.
Here the fairy hues of flowers
Carpet meadows, copse and bowers,
Made for happy, happy lovers.
Many a painted insect hovers,
Many a gemmy fly uncovers
When the starry dews fall damp
Like the stars a twinkling lamp,
All that in all zones appear,
Cold, or warm, or far, or near,
Nature limns its duplicate here.

" These are all that cannot die,
Else of glory and of grace,
All have faded without trace
Like rainbows of a summer sky.

Art or beauty of her own
Shows no vestige, not a stone
Stands, where once her temple stood,
Sanctifying solitude.
Voices of her seers are hushed,
Spirit of her sons is crushed.
Ne'er against Oppression's rod,
Wreak they now the wrath of God,
Save some bandit on the hill
Feebly strikes for vengeance still.
Mirth and song are heard no more,
Feast nor dance along her shore,
For Man's deadliest enemies
Have been her's to curse and seize.
Battle, famine, fire, disease,
These her heritage of ill,
These the foes that crush her still!

" Not till Memory loses sway
Bid me turn from Vengeance way.
When I can forget the wrongs
That my recollection throngs,—
When I fawn upon the Power
That has brought this servile hour,
Then if Justice bids me live,
Come and ask me to forgive—
But may blackest curses rest
On the coward traitor's breast,
That would for a moment turn
Could it make Oppression mourn,
Or the time and chance forsake

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

Hatred in its blood to slake.
Heaven turn from his prayer to save!
Earth deny the wretch a grave!
And the powers of hell arise
To prolong his agonies!
Till the fiends shrink in dismay
From one more accursed than they!"

Mounting both,—their path they made
Through the stilly, starry glade,
Both in silence. Bright as noon,
Rode, full orb'd, the argent moon,
And the ruddy shield of Mars
Shone conspicuous of the stars,—
But they all unnoticed shone
To the riders hastening on,
Who as little reck'd of flowers,
Rudely trampled in the bowers,—
Phlox in pink-white beauty set,
Asphodel and mignonette,
And the wild rose torn aloof
By their chargers' flying hoof.
Yet the solemn spiritual calm,
All pervading, worked a charm;
And her faith spread wings to soar
Unto hopes ne'er dared before
Till she view'd him snatched from death
Even a convert to her Faith.
Slowly, too, his heart's distress,
Lost his venom'd bitterness,
And again he seem'd to see

In his plans the augury
Of a second Maccabee!

Th' offspring of a priestly sire,
Whose own father had beheld
Israel's hope by Titus knelled
And her liberties expire,
And her temples wreathed in fire,
And, still battling 'gainst her doom,
In her service found a tomb.
This Bar-Cocab's early years
Heard and pondered o'er with tears,
Swearing then to dedicate
Unto Rome eternal hate.
And many a village given to flame,
Many a deed of fearful name,
Many a tax and treasure sent
To th' imperial government,
Spoiled by his brigands, attest
Vengeance sleeps not in his breast.

Short his years of middle age,
Yet his mind, matured and sage
For such years, though few their span,
Change the youth into the man.
Prematurely grey his hair,—
Tall his form, and straight, but spare,
Stern his glances, and the trace
On anxiety on his face,
Where the wrinkles deep appear
Of all feelings, save of fear,

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

Though his laugh when he unbent
Had no sound of merriment!

Soon they reach the picket line,
Halt and give the countersign.
Far as e'er the eye could reach,
 Camped along the broad champaign
Like the sands upon the beach
 Stretched the tented host of men.
Circling all, an earthen mound
Five feet high, made ample bound,
On whose close filled height arrayed,
Rose a dangerous palisade,
Guarded on the inner side
By the ditches deep and wide.
Prominent by its greater height
Stood Bar-Cocab's tent in sight,
In the central space, and round
Others had their proper bound.
Here the footman, by his spear,
Horsemen there, and chargers near,
And the engines further rear,
Where stern vigil did secure
Baggages and furniture;—
All in as exact array
Even as Cæsar might display.

With a sudden glance of pride
Each detail Bar-Cocab eyed
While the glad attendants there
Rendered every needed care.

She then to her private tent—
 He to his, his pathway bent,
 And of armor there undressed,
 Wooed an hour, e'er winning rest;
 But the lady's faithful maid
 Scarcely could conclude her aid,
 Ere she saw her eyelids close
 Softly as a babe's repose.

CANTO SECOND

Sweet the fairy hour when Day,
 Leaning o'er the slumbering Night,
 Has two minds—to flee away
 Or to wake her with the light.
 Somewhere from the East, a breeze
 Whispers to the nodding trees,
 And as if they dreamed of bees,
 All the blossoms move in sleep.
 Perhaps a bird with timid cheep
 Wakes a moment in surprise,
 Looking 'round with sleepy eyes,
 Just a little moment listening,
 Sees the paling stars aglistening,
 Knows the Dawn is drawing nigh;
 Yet again he veils his eye
 With his head beneath his wing,
 Till the Morning's trumpets ring,
 And high in the Orient sky
 Day's advancing banners fly.

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

Sweet the fairy hour, for then
Sleep seems best to weary men.
To the mourner, then, if e'er,
Slumber comes to ease his care.
To the hind, that ploughs the lea,
To the sailor, on the sea,—
To the soldier, then it seems
Comes the sweetest hour of dreams,
Just before the daylight breaking,—
Just before the time of waking.

So upon Bar-Cocab pressed
Balmy sleep, refreshing rest—
When there swelled a shout so loud
Thunder from the bursting cloud
Hurtling, echoing, overhead
Could not sound so deep or dread.
Quickly as he heard the roar,
Sprang the chieftain to the door
On the eastern palisade.
Lo, a yawning breach betrayed
Through the fallen wall of earth,
Whence the echo had its birth;
But so suddenly the clay
Fell and in the ditches lay,
Like it seemed the Earthquake's shock
More than ram or darted rock;
And his semi-conscious thought
Such had deemed the loud report,
Had he not seen through it poured
Hundreds of the Roman horde,

Heard the trumpets' deep alarms,
And the cry, "To arms! to arms!"

A portion of the Jews' command
Was a straggling motley band
All untrained.—Of some, the aim,
Lust of plunder, some, from shame,—
Men and women, young and fair,
E'en old age crouched trembling there,
Who to find a kinder life
Dared the Battle's awful strife,
Rather than to bear the mood
Of their lords in servitude.
These bore first the Conflict's frown—
As some landslide crunches down
From the mountain to the town,
Or in northern seas the ice
Towering like a precipice
Crushes into instant death
The lorn ship that steers beneath.
So they fell before the blow
Of th' infuriate, ruthless foe,
And turned mad with wild affright
Like game penned by fire that grows,
All confused with frantic sight,
Losing ken of friends from foes,—
Trampled down a greater host
Than the enemy's sword could boast.
Women, children, madly mixed,
Hoofed to death, by spears transfixed.
Oh, what savage carnage there,—

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

Selfishness urged by despair,
When nor age nor youth could stay,
Nor Beauty awe the lust to slay!

Stunned a moment and amazed,
Cocab at the conflict gazed
As in doubt; but all might be
Sleep's disordered reverie.
Till flung through his open tent
Fell a pilum, luck'ly spent,
Still so near its target pressed,
That it almost grazed his breast.
Thus admonished, quickly dressing,
In his armor long delayed,
Cocab grasped his Spanish blade
And his pilum in his hand.
To the front was soon progressing,
There to take supreme command,
And win or perish with his band.

With his advent came new life
To his followers in the strife—
Who impetuously along
Rush against the 'whelming throng.
Many a Roman soldier dies
As the pilum fiercely flies;
But so numerous, they withstand,
And the fight veers hand to hand.
Broadwords in the sunlight flash
Red from many a frightful gash,
While with the Barbarian's mace,

Others still maintain their place,
Till the field is red with blood,
Running an ensanguined flood.

Then the cavalry whose host
Greater numbers Rome could boast,
Soon became in fierce onslaught
Driven from where the others fought;
Meeting in the southern field,—

With vast power the Roman threw
His dread phalanx on the Jew.
Who, pledged to rather die than yield,
Solidly against them wheeled,

Standing firm, though many a horse
Fled the ranks whose rider reeled

To the Earth a mangled corse.
Again the deadly charge, again
The repulse of desperate man,—
Maddened ranks thinned more and more,
Men and chargers, dripping gore,
And again the sickening thud
Of opposing foes in blood!
Then irregular sallies where
Now surrendering to despair
All their hope was in the strife
Dear to sacrifice each life,
And in Desperation's mood
Glut defeat in foemen's blood,
Till in final rally stood
Of Bar-Cocab's men but one
Bloody, reckless and alone!

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

Here the Romans ceased their strife,
Offering to parole his life ;
But he, scorning them indeed,
Dashed the rowels in his steed—
Ere they saw his purpose dread
He had cleft the leader's head,
Hesitating still to strike
Yet another meets the like !
Ah, so rash, the soul can dare
In the fury of despair,
But that blow hath cost him dear,—
He shall strike no other here !

Cocab's mounted form was seen
In all quarters of the field,—
His a charmed life had been ;
For though many a form had reeled,
Dying, as the Hebrew passed,
And his deadily pilum cast
Scathless still he thundered on
Whirlwind like, just felt, then gone,
Till he reached the sheltered tent
Where his lady love was pent.
When as if with wings endued
Lo, she blindly past him, ran
By two Roman foot pursued.
Just an instant, like a man
Turned to stone, then into speed
Spurring on his foaming steed,
He was abreast and madly rushed
His horse upon the first and crushed

With his weapon's furious force
The pursuer from his horse—
But himself beneath the blow
Of the second, tottered low,
Who nor stopped to ascertain
Whether he were stunned or slain,
But pursued with eager pace
Her whose beauty lured his chase.

As the ruffian drew more near
Even her brain throbbed wild with fear—
Still her pulsing agony
Winged her speed, that to the eye
Lo, her feet appeared to fly,
Scarcely seeing where or why,
Or choice in any road of blood;
For her fear shod feet to flee
Everywhere the horrid flood.
This she had not time to think
Nor of eyes that seemed to blink
At her from the field of Death
As she fled with bated breath.
Perhaps she passed two living foes
With red arms in deadly close,
Or perchance a group who turn
Cheering as her swift feet spurn
The hot ground, or blush for shame
As her vile tormentor came;
But to help her none essayed,—
Was she not a Jewish maid?

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

What the hour she could not tell—
 Moments in her frenzied fears
Wore the masks of months and years.
 Distance stretched to many a league,
 Footsore hardship and fatigue—
Till the landscape seemed to swim
Into darkness, every limb
To its utmost tension taxed,
Quick as eye could wink relaxed,
And, in her extremity,
 Suddenly palsied seemed to be—
With despairing shrieks, she fell,
On her arm his hand was laid,
On her cheek his breathing played,
And she dared not scan his face,
Yet—who spoke those words of grace?
Was it dreaming, did her ear
Truthfully the accents hear?
Words that spoke her danger o'er,
Words that bade her fear no more,
Words that sweeter o'er her fell,
Than in Childhood's sunny dell,
Welcome after long farewell;
Or to exile far away
Voices of his native lay;
Or fond Beauty's longed for "yes"
To Love's panting eagerness.

'Twas no dream for bending o'er
 With a frank solicitude,
Leaned a face whose features wore

Th' impress of a nobler mood—
Near him stood the caitiff there,
Even unwilling still to spare,
Though he sullenly obeyed
Th' orders that his general made,
Leaving both at the command
With his regiment to stand.

"I'm the Roman Governor!" said
Her new friend, "be not dismayed,
Harm nor fear shall follow thee,
As my sister shalt thou be—
'Tis a pleasure to provide
Escort for thee and a guide
To my home and safely there
Thou wilt find the tenderest care."
Ere she could reply he gave
Th' orders to his waiting slave,
Who found escort soon and horse,
And in shelter guided them
Till they reached, in rapid course,
Safety in Jerusalem.

The strife was o'er—that noonday sun,
Shining o'er the battle won,
Cast his beams of yellow light
On the saddening, sickening sight.
Hundreds that alive that morn
Ne'er shall see another born,
Other hundreds see it glare
On the field of slaughter there,

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

Shackled prisoners of Despair!
Thus all Cocab's save a few
Who for final safety flew,
Yet perchance had better died
Fighting by their comrades' side!

Cocab, whom the Governor sought,
Was not with the captives brought—
Nor could any soldier state
What had been the Hebrew's fate,
Till the latest straggler came,
Winning transitory fame,

By a tale by none gainsaid,
Telling how upon the field
He had fought to make him yield,
Failing this had struck him dead,
As he thought, but later still,
When he climbed the gory hill,
Where upon the early day,
He had seen the body lay,

Found him now removed or fled—
Which had been, the leader's lot
'Scaped or fall'n, he knew it not.

It was noon—'tis night—who there
Roams at this lone hour and dread,
When the spoiler flees the dead?
With wild face and clotted hair—
All unarmed and forehead bare!

Ah, how changed, and yet I trace,
Cocab's features in the face!

Then he leaves with hurried tread,
Pausing on the lonely hill
Where he can see Salem still,
Or reversing view his dead.—
Hark, along the summer air
Hear his farewell of Despair!

“ Israel, captive and forlorn,
Woe that I should live to mourn!
Of thy thousands strown in death,
Why has Death still spared me breath?
Me, to see the tyrant's host,
Me, to hear his swelling boast,
And the midnight of disgrace
Me, alone unscathed, to trace,
Starless, glooming o'er my race?
Why has Death thus stricken low
Hearts enamored still of life,
While the one who prayed his blow,
'Scapes unharmed from Peril's strife?

“ Thou, who clothed in living fire,
Chose us for Thine own, how long
Ere the heathen feel Thine ire,
And Thy vengeance for our wrong?
See on yonder bloody plain,
Thousands of Thy people slain,
Where a smiling city stood,
See the desolate solitude,
Let Thine anger, turned from us,
Fall on those who spoil us thus,

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

Hasten the auspicious hour
Ushering in Messiah's power,
Ripening all the prophecy
That I dreamed fulfilled in me!

" I see Him,—worthier than I—
With his glory from afar,
Who shall bring salvation nigh,
And disperse the clouds of war.
He shall come to wear the crown
That the Ages for Him keep—
His the triumph and renown,
He the victor's prize shall reap!
Then, Jerusalem, thou shalt be
The one sacred spot of Earth,
When from climes beyond the sea,
Men shall turn their eyes to thee,
Bowing low and reverently,
To thy high superior worth,
From thee, shall the Truth proceed,
By thee, nations shall be freed,
Thou shalt bid their sorrows cease
With the benison of peace,
All the centuries shall endower
With their wealth, Thy gracious power,
Art and knowledge, too, combine
Blent in incense at Thy shrine,
Justice, wed to Love, shall be
Pillars of Messiah's throne,
And the kings shall bow the knee,
And to His sceptre yield their own.

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

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" But, oh Rome! mine enemy,
In my occult sight I see,
Thou shalt cease to be the Free!
For thy power and triumphing,
Is indeed a bloodstained thing,
Thou who to thy yoke dost bring,
All the riches of the Earth.
Soon thou shalt not sit in mirth,
Sackcloth shall thy covering be.
Still uprear to heedless stars,
Many a proud memorial arch,
Yoke thy captives to the cars
Of the Conqueror's homeward march,
Wrench from the defenceless East
Gems to glitter at thy feast,
And then cross the shuddering wave,
Beating on the distant shore,
In the wantonness of power,
Even to make the savage slave.
Yet, though thou canst smile to hear
Captives clank their galling chains,
Know God's justice hovers near,
Recompensing for their pains!
Wails of subjugated climes
Shall prevail against thy crimes,
Great and matchless as thou art,
Thou shalt know a widowed heart!
And against thee shall be hurled
All the vengeance of the world,
Long and dark the years shall be
Of thy nameless infamy! "

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

Ceasing with a glance to right,
Where still Salem towered in light,
Then a long sad look to meet
The red field of his defeat,
With an imprecation fierce,
On he fled—my vision still
To the wood beyond the hill,
Traced him—but no power of will,
Could his further pathway pierce.
Oh! where could Hope a covert spread,
For him to safely lay his head?

CANTO THIRD

Light beloved of God and man—
Bride of Day, with mantling blushes,
O'er the kindling Orient flushes.
All the eyes of Nature scan,
With a thousand joyous thrills,
How behind the Eastern hills,
All the darkness of the Night
Whitens 'neath the wand of Light—
Fair the diamond dew dries up
In the slender lily's cup,
And in copse and wooded aisles,
Grassy field and velvet lawn,
Nature's tears turn beamy smiles,
But the angel of the Dawn.
In his marvelous revealing,
Ne'er more beauteous sight revealed,
Than when through the lattice stealing.

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

103

Limned with gold the fretted ceiling,
And the captive's eyes unsealed.

But what makes the lady start,
With a wildly beating heart,
As she saw some shape of doom,
In that sculptured cedarn room,
With a shudder and a scream?
Soft, fair Ruth, 'tis but a dream!
Thrice though hath she dreamed the same,
Thrice to her hath Cocab came,
In her Sleep's strange reverie,
What should the deep portent be?

Thrice by day the Governor came
With his heart and eyes aflame,
With a love that conquered pride,
Offered thrice and thrice denied.
Thrice the fearful dream returned,
Lions' eyes that blazing burned,
Then they doffed their bristling hide,
As she turned her eyes aside,
And oh, miracle of grace,
Cocab stood there in their place!

On a table by her couch,
Lo, a missive she could vouch,
Laid not there the night before—
Wondering then its seal she tore.
"No disloyalty," it read,
"Ask I to thy sainted dead,

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

Let him have the prior part,
The allegiance of thine heart,
But give me a friend's esteem,
Without falsehood unto him;
More than this I will not claim,
Even though pledged a dearer name.
He being dead, oh, grant to me,
Right to guide and succor thee!
As if with his latest word,
He had bade my suit be heard,
And committed to me there,
Thee for my peculiar care.
Wait the time even till thy grief,
In its distance finds relief,
Test my love and find it shown,
Ever true to win thine own.—
Ponder what I here avow,
Nor return thy answer now,
But in time, oh, let me find,
Thy sweet will to me resigned.”

Passed a week and then renewed
He his ardent suit pursued,
With the argument and art,
Of a lover's hopeful heart.
But in vain with Fate to cope,
Ruth could give his Faith no hope—
Then as yielding to his fate,
He seemed less importunate;
Seven days rolled by and then
Seven ere he plead again,

But how changed in that short time,
Like an age of grief and crime!
Lo, his cheek had lost its youth,
White and sunken, too, in sooth,
And his brow was lined with pain,
Livid with the starting vein,—
Even his eye sepulchral shown,
Bright its beam but wildly thrown,
Hair unkempt, untrimmed his beard,
And each feature wan and weird,
Even his clothing disarranged,—
Ah, indeed, how sadly changed!

“Pardon”—even as he spoke,
Huskily the wild words broke,—
“Pardon, if thou canst,” he cried,
“Means which my despair may guide,—
All my hopes I can resign,
All but one, thou must be mine—
If my pleading fails me, force,
Must at last be my resource.”

With eyes that flashed and bosom heaving,
Ruth replied, yet scarce believing
Th’ awful threat his words implied,
“Never shall I yield,” she cried,
“Though thou to thine aid dost bring,
Even Captivity’s fiercest sting—
Shut yon sunshine from my eyes,
Chain my limbs till each one dies,

Still I bend not to thy will,
But defy and scorn thee still."

"Oh beware," he said, "beware,
Dare not more than I can bear!
Think how near, ere 'tis too late,
Unrequited love and hate!"

"Call'st thine love? it only proves
Heart like thine is never loves.
Slander not the word nor prate
Of a love akin to hate.—
Love is of a different soul,
Owning e'er the same control—
Still though time and distance part,
Pays the worship of the heart,
Pays it e'en though unreturned,
Or in doubt or firmly spurned.
As though trampled, still the flower
Gives its perfume to the bower,
As the bird with fettered wings,
Pining, still melodious sings.
Love no self-will has but bends
As its deep affection tends—
Love can suffer, love can wait,
But ne'er fellowship with hate.
Love I feared was in thy breast,
Feared, since it must be unblest—
But thy threats have proved to me,
'Twas not love but vanity—
Coward thus thy glance to lour

On the captive of thy power!
But I feel Bar-Cocab lives—
Fear thy different answer gives,
Some day, too, he will demand
Me, thus thrown into thy hand.
But dead or living, hear my oath,
Thou canst never win my troth,
Heathen as thou art indeed,
In thy nature and thy creed,
God forbids my life to be
Linked in marriage unto thee."

"Thank thee for the thought! my power
Succor yields in Peril's hour,
If love asks its sympathy,
But beware its enmity!
Thou reproach'st my pagan creed,
 Woman, dost forget thy faith,
Is by Roman law indeed,
 Judged a crime deserving death?
Yet I dare protect thee still—
If thou yieldest to my will—
Dare me, dread the worst extreme,
Scoffed and maddened love may dream!
Thine is woman's thought of love,
Pictured in the timid dove
But I cannot, being scoffed,
 School my bursting heart and mind,
 Meek to bear and be resigned—
Nature built me not so soft—
I was born to love but once,

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

And to find or force response,
Or the scoffer shall not live,
On my ruined hopes and give
Preference to a rival's suit,
While I worship, meekly mute.
Nay, decide even now thy fate—
Love to shield love e'er too late,
Or deny and bear my hate!"

"So this faithful heart of mine
Beats" the lady said "like thine,
Though thou scornest the gentle dove,
Like her I but once can love."

"Since my love can never move
Thee into responsive love,
Take my hate and with it cower,
'Neath a passion of more power."
Turning then his serf he called,
Who before him shrank appalled,
"Slave, unto a cell convey
The Jewess saved the other day,
Strip her of her garb and clothe
Her in garments Christian loathe,
Guard her well for with thy head
Her escape shall be repaid!"
Then he, waiting no reply,
Entered in his room of state,
To seal judicially his hate,
And sign the writ that she should die.

Calmly creep the hours toward night,
Calmly sinks the sun from sight,
Yet before the stars that shine,
Marking gaudy Day's decline,
Wheel their glittering ranks in line,
Wide the tidings spread and seem
There the universal theme.
Gentiles freely with the Jew,
The absorbing theme renew,
Now her beauty, now her doom,
Awful in that beauty's bloom,
And insinuations thrown
'Tis not for her faith alone,
And the air of mystery
What her unknown rank might be,
During three days given of grace
Add fresh interest to her case.

Ruth, poor victim of his hate,
Bears she well her altered state?
Dungeon fear and fare have they
Worn her heart of grace away?
Hath the change from gilded room,
 With all Luxury could provide,
To the dungeon's rayless gloom,
 Hath this crushed her spirit's pride?
Nay, in her unshaken breast,
Faith gives more than earthly rest—
Trusting Him whose presence near
Makes a prison shine with cheer;
Sure a heavenly crown to wear,

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

For the passion suffered there,
So the night brought slumber deep—
Peaceful as an infant's sleep.

Not such nights, though, o'er him passed,
Since her tyrant saw her last.
To his sleep deserted eyes
Constantly her features rise,
Else his home a solitude,
Where forbidden in his mood,
All but servants to intrude,
Who with fear pass shuddering by,
That mad glance and blood-shot eye,
Or beside his doorway crouch,
Proffering food he will not touch.
There he sits for hours alone,
Motionless and heeding none,
In the room where once he came,
To her whom, now, none can name,
Though it suits his frenzy there,
To recline upon her chair,
 With his head leaned on his hands,
 Thinking—but who understands
 What the madness of despair,
That aflame with wild revenge,
Will not, cannot, pause or change,
Though it feels when all alone,
Reason totter on her throne,
Like some ship, her rudder gone,
Whom the gale drives madly on."

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

III

Oft he startles from his chair,
With a madman's glassy glare,
Fleeing on from room to room,
As Orestes fled his doom,
While the words of desperate fear,
Fall on every bondsman's ear ;
Telling how in his wild mood,
Fire he feels consume his blood,
And, apart from mortal life,
His spirit writhes in deathless strife,
And, around, as in him, plays
Tortures of that endless blaze,
Which flames e'er unquenchable,
For the lives that merit hell ;
Or, recurring to its cause,
Perhaps the sight his frenzy draws,
Limns a maiden young and fair,
Whose sad eyes implore to spare,
 While on her nude limbs are stains,
 From the bruise of galling chains,
On their whiteness gleaming there.
Near her in the act to spring,
Lo ! a lion balancing,
Missing her, the beast has pressed,
Its rough hide against his breast.
So vivid is his fancy's sight,
Nature sickening faints outright,
But revived his mind grows clear,
Cursing at the frenzied fear,
Then he seeks his room to hide,
The shame of his unhumbled pride.

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

'Twas the second night that fell
O'er Ruth in her dismal cell,
Full the Moon, half-heaven high,
Bright the stars bestud the sky,
Hushed the breeze, so calm, so still,
Not an echo left the hill,
The Governor in her empty room,
Watched the early shadows gloom,
And upon that heaven so clear,
Marked the glittering orbs appear,
As if (as ancient oracles say,
Shone in their sybillic ray,
The destinies of men indeed),
There he strove his fate to read ;
Long he looked along that scene,
 Feeling perhaps his fevered breast,
 Soothed to something like to rest,
'Neath those rays so calm though keen :
Long perchance he still had gazed,
Till a casual eye he raised,
To a star that shone so bright,
On the dark blue plain of night,
He chose it for his future's flight,
When through those still depths of air,
 Lo, it fell a trail of light
 Fading into utter night !
Chilling him with a worse despair.
" Oh," he murmured, " even the sky
Threatens curses from on high ! "
Nor e'er could he look again
On that sparkling, starry plain,

But, so slight a thing can change,
Turned on maddening thoughts to range.

Hours, long hours, he paces round,
And his footfalls echoed sound,
Wakes the slaves that hear with dread,
That quick, tireless, ceaseless, tread.
Then a shriek their ears appall,
Lo, a ghastly shriek, a fall,
Then a gurgling cry of pain,
Then a silence dread again,
Then a moment's list to hear,
The last echo strike the ear,
Then with bated breath dismayed,
And lit tapers rush to aid,
Though their heavy hearts forebode
They can do their lord no good.

Dread the scene that meets their sight,
By the taper's flickering light,
There scarce dead their master laid,
Pierced through by his sheathless blade;
In his madness thus their lord,
Had misused his battled sword.
The poor useless arms still shake,
At the timid touch they make;
Wild his eyes ope at that touch,
Then close sightless in reproach,
As they bear him to his bed,
Yet they know the soul has fled,
Ere the leech they send for still,

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

Sadly mourns his lack of skill.
Ah, too sure th' aim of despair
For a hope of saving there!

Ruth, although the deed fulfilled,
What her bosom feared not willed,
Felt the end so swift, the blow,
Seemed to her her greatest woe.
Fast and sympathizing fell,
The first tears shed in her cell,
And regret her lips express,
Silent for her own distress.
'Mazed the jailer views the scene,
Of the captive who had been,
In the cell as calm as though
She had neither fear nor woe,
Mourn him now whose lawless hate,
Doomed her to her awful fate.
So little do they know who live
 'Mid men's scenes of battled strife,
 With revenge and rancor rife,
How a woman can forgive!

It does not to her heart occur,
What his death may mean to her.
How the hope her bosom pent,
That at last he might relent,
And with love o'ercoming hate,
Save her from the grasp of fate,
Was now irrevocably gone.
But it comes now with the sun,

That is ushering into birth,
 Her last day upon the Earth;
 Comes but not disturbs the mind,
 That, on heav'n fixed, is resigned.
 Feeling in her longing breast,
 Yearnings to embrace the test,
 And win what gleams before her eyes,
 Hope of hopes, the martyr's prize.
 Though she does not boast to seal,
 Her belief in blood and feel
 Without shudder or a groan,
 From torn flesh and broken bone,
 But her heart has pondered o'er,
 Those who greater sufferings bore,
 Since Stephen testifying stood,
 And his faith sealed with his blood,
 Confident that strength from Heaven
 To its bleeding saints is given!

Morning dawns on Ruth's dread day,
 Mocking with its brightest ray.
 Th' early matin lay she heard,
 Of the unimprisoned bird,
 That high o'er her dungeon dun,
 First salutes the rising sun.
 Free the winds around her waft
 Th' odors of the flowers they quaffed,
 And she hears the rustling trees,
 Swayed to motion by the breeze,
 Till the jailer brings her food,
 And disturbs her solitude.

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

The theatre that Herod built,
Still in pride of beauty stood,
Its shafts elaborately hewed
From the costliest marble, filled
With hate, thy sons Jerusalem!
Whose bigotry abhorred that gem;
Scorning th' efforts of his reign,
To enveil the tyrant's chain,
That he forged around her rights
By proud domes and pleasure sites;
Vainly does he woo their hearts,
They hated him and scoffed his arts,
Yet had they foreseen had come,
There to cruel martyrdom,
An apostate from their creed,
They had pardoned him the deed,
Rearing close their temple by
The pile they deemed profanely nigh.

Never since it had been built,
Had such concourse in it filled,
As at the dread hour had come,
T' applaud the christian's martyrdom.
For to grandly celebrate,
Th' advent to his new estate,
The Governor's successor had
To the scene his subjects bade.
First a drama, but the crowd
Feverishly, with whispers loud,
Wait the final scene, in them,
Music soft or play-queen's gem,

Or lithe dancer ne'er at rest,
Wake but little interest.
Tier o'er tier, a countless throng,
Arch and galleries among,
Wait with deep impatience there,
Ruth's arrival and despair.
Even woman's gentler soul,
Chafes at mercy's mild control,
And without solicitude,
Hopes to shed a sister's blood,
While apart and seated high,
The Governor looks with stoic eye.

Now the crowd grew hushed as death,
Expectation held its breath,
As with mighty roar each beast,
In th' arena was released.
First the crier did advise,
Crimes for which the victim dies;
Such he charged the christian name,
Roused the mob to wilder flame;
But the jailer led her there,
As if grown compassionate,
He now mourned her horrid fate,
And despised th' unreasoning hate,
That could slay a thing so fair.
Standing on the parapet,
That barred from the dangerous place,
Where the beasts crouch low or chase
'Round the strong protected place,
Waiting, for no signal yet,

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

From the Governor's hands display,
He shall cast the beasts their prey.

Murmurs 'scaped the multitude,
As before them all she stood,
E'en of admiration—ne'er
Had they seen a face more fair.
Youth's soft bloom was scarcely pale,
On the cheek that told no tale
Of distress; each lustrous eye,
Ne'er had beamed more bright or dry;
Terror reigned not in her breast;
But in peace and self-possessed,
She turned on the populace
The rapt sunshine of her face.
As some winged creature fair,
Who a moment had lit there,
Might glance on them surely safe,
Though their powerless rage might chafe,
So she gazed at them; but they
Felt no pang of pity pray
In their hearts—the beasts that champed
Hungry jaws and fought and stamped
In th' arena had more grace,
Than th' infuriate populace.

Still the Governor's hands delay!
Hath now Mercy won the day,
'Gainst th' insensate lust to slay?
Dare he now absolve her creed,
That to him is crime indeed?

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

119

Dare he thwart the thirsting mood,
Of that craven multitude?
Sooth, then, he is more than brave,
If this hour he seeks to save!
Why the pause, while wild and loud
Rings the clamor of the crowd?
Lo, he stands irresolute,
Listening to a stranger's suit,
Which must be of grave import,
Now to occupy his thought.
Leaning next he waves to gain
Their ear and the delay explain:
" Friends, this stranger brings my ear,
Tidings of new danger near,
Which but half an hour in sooth,
Or confirms or proves untruth.
But a few weeks since I knew
Cocab as an outcast Jew,
Leading on a lawless horde,
To whom pillage was reward,
Till the later tidings bore,
Jew revolt from Roman power;
Then the news of battles fought,
His force destroyed, himself uncaught.
This man, fled from his command,
Brings strange tidings of his band,
How Bar-Cocab 'scaped again,
With the remnant of his men,
From each distant province draws,
New support unto his cause,
Of whom he himself was one;

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

But for evil to him done,
By his chief, repeated long,
Now seeks vengeance for his wrong,
And will Cocab's plans betray.
Rescue! seize her! traitor, stay!"

Too late to foil the rescue planned
By Bar-Cocab and who fled
From the field of ruin red,
To grasp from a consenting hand,
The prisoner whom the jailer held—
Who well bribed and fully taught,
Unsuspected, as he brought
Ruth near where the lions fought,
Chose a place to stand and wait,
For the signal, near a gate,
Farthest from the crowd but near
Where outside three friends appear,
And as the stranger's word compelled
The Governor his tale to hear,
And a moment to him drew
The multitude's attention, too,
Few saw the treachery consummated,
Nor marked how springing out the gate
Another bore her lovely weight,
And joining there the three who waited,
Strode a steed that saddled stood,
And galloped with them unpursued,
Until by a cry recalled,
Th' audience beheld appalled,

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

121

But all powerless, whence they fled,
Of their prey disherited.

Then a chaos reigned that made,
For escape a welcome aid,
Leaping from the Governor's grasp,
The stranger did his sword unclasp—
Almost gained the outer door,
As his way he fiercely bore,
When a voice o'er the uproar :—
" 'Tis Bar-Cocab's self," it cries ;
" Seize him ere yon door he tries ! "
One is dead, who rashly thought,
To debar the path he sought ;
Two have felt his fatal blade,
But in vain—the mob have made,
Concerted onslaught where he stood,
And thrown to Earth he is subdued.

Execrations load the air,
'Gainst the captive pinioned there,
Who dared own his name nor quailed
At the hatred that assailed,
But cast his fearless eye along,
That mad disappointed throng,
As if 'mid a feast's repose,
'Stead of circled 'round with foes,
Who even of his nation stood,
Thirsting, too, to shed his blood ;
Hearts that yesterday had bled,
Following the cause he led,

The Bride of Bar-Cocab

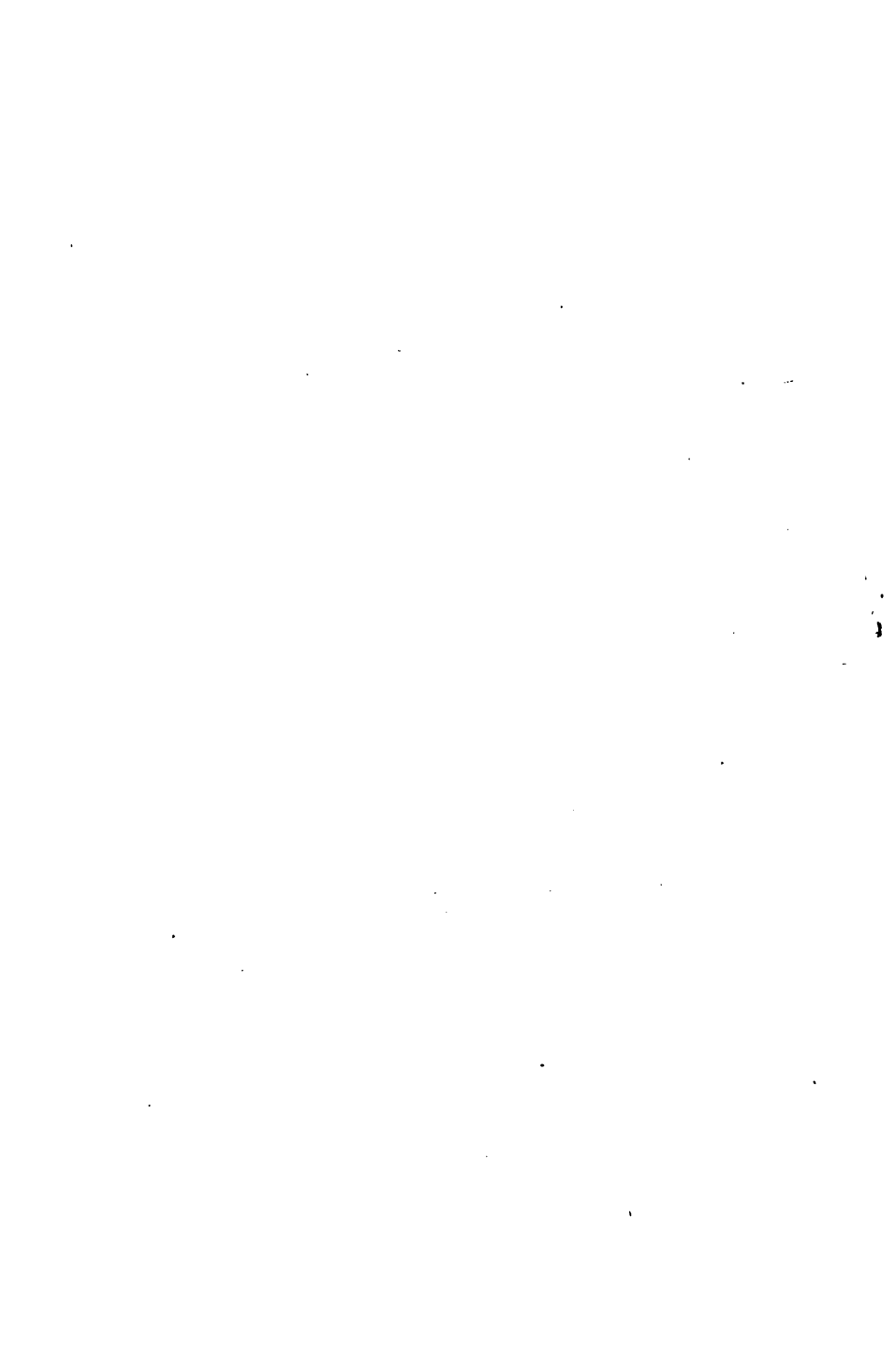
Loathe him now who snatched from death,
The apostate from their faith,
Deeming him by that displayed,
E'en like her a renegade.

Bold his eyes survey the place,
With defiance to each face;
Then on the arena's space,
Resting but a moment there,
As the lions' eyeballs glare,
Yet, as quick as light, the thought,
The wild multitude has caught.
"Ad leones!" is the cry,
"Such the fate that suits the spy!
He has stolen our prey, 'tis fair,
He himself the theft repair!"
That cry that rolls impatiently,
May not now resisted be.
"Loose his bands!" and unarmed yet,
They fling him o'er the parapet.
With a roar that rolls along,
Like a thunder cloud among
Echoing hills, the lions rush

* * * * *

This was centuries ago;
All are dead and mingled dust,
All who made the storied show,
Blown with every desert gust,
King and outlaw, lord and slave,
None can tell their name or grave.

But the monks delight to tell,
As they ring the convent bell,
As they count their evening beads,
Of a holy lady's deeds,
Of the constancy and truth,
Of the ancient Abbess Ruth,
Of her goodness to the poor,
To the suffering and obscure,
How that in the desert sands,
Crouching tigers kissed her hands,
And the birds left tree and air,
And her charmed companions were.
So to days of snow white hair,
Till God's gentle minister,
Death, breathed o'er her face, and she
Woke to immortality.
So fore'er the good we do,
Plants a seed that grows anew,
Somewhere to fresh living starts,
Shrined in other human hearts.
As a flower that dies to give,
Seed that in the Spring will live,
So the memory of the pure,
Will perennially endure;
While the wealthy and the great,
Perish with their things of state,
And memorial brass and stone
Are by rust and Time o'erthrown.



The Last Day in the Hospital

THE LAST DAY IN THE HOSPITAL

Cold and bleak the walls arise
Of the Hospital de l'Isle,
Though above are shining skies,
And around the waters smile.

Still there Nature's face to view,
Seems most serious as you pass,
On the wave a darker blue,
Darker green upon the grass.

P'rhaps 'tis fancy, still it seems
There less joyous comes the Spring,
With less zest the Morning beams,
And the birds less gladly sing.

Even the glitter of the lights,
Gleaming through the iron barred glass,
Strews a ghastly glare at nights,
To the steamers as they pass.

But within its sombre walls,
All is peaceful, white and calm,
Through its neat planned wards and halls,
Breathes a constant prayer and psalm.

For there free from petty strife,
Social pangs and Scandal's breath,

The Last Day in the Hospital

Broods the mystery of Life,
Glooms the mystery of Death.

Read how greater still one day,
Like the star of Jove above
Half the Heaven's dimmer ray,
Came the mystery of Love!

When they bore him in the boat,
To the Hospital, it seemed
That they bore a corpse afloat,
Hope not even the doctors dreamed.

Feverish, weak and long confined
On a bed of waning breath,
Sleep fell on his soul and mind,
Like the shade of coming death.

Nothing of his life they knew,—
Found unconscious on the street,
Richly dressed and moneyed too,
Still no tales his lips repeat.

In his pockets, not a scrap
Gave of that veiled past a clue,
What the cause of his mishap,
Whence his illness, no one knew.

So upon his bed he lay,
Death and Life for him at strife,

The Last Day in the Hospital

129

Death now seemed to win the fray,
Hope now seemed to side with Life.

So he crawled to Health's fair track,
As a swimmer who might go,
Too far out to sea, comes back
With laborious strokes and slow.

Then from lips long stilled to speech,
Like a coin, a word outrolled
And the tale long out of reach,
Seemed on tip of being told.

But the message, at the first,
Proved the burden of a mind,
That, 'mid personal griefs, rehearsed
Musings of a larger kind.

"This is the Progressive Age,"
Thus he murmured, "We are heirs,
Not indeed of seer and sage,
But of men of wide affairs.

"Not of Wisdom, not of Grace,
These we count but little things,
In the greed of Pelf and Place
In the reign of Money Kings.

"True some millionaire may bid,
Thousands for a painted head,
But its worth to him is hid,
And its artist died unfed.

130 The Last Day in the Hospital

" Poets, Progress once might use,
 In a world in swaddling clothes,
Now we relegate the Muse *
 To the Nursery or to Prose.

" These are days we serve strange gods,
 Man of brawn and dainty prig,
All give worship seeking odds,
 But the gamble must be big.

" What are all these big things worth,
 All the mighty works we do,
If we build of baser Earth,
 If our models are not true?

" Do you think Bartholdi's Gog,
 Worth a single finger planned,
(From an auction catalogue),
 By old Praxiteles' hand?

* * * * *

" Never fastest railroad train,
 Fastest steamer built for pelf,
Could convey nor trick of brain,
 Sordid past from present self.

" No reality of Wealth,
 Trust me this is Heaven's plan,
Or by might or guile or stealth,
 Can Man cheat his fellow man.

The Last Day in the Hospital

131

" Each must give the best he has
To the general fund for all,
What he keeps like the upas,
Turns to poison or to gall.

" See the miser's hoarded gold,
Purchasing his children's sin!
While he moulders in the mold,
Spent on wantons and on gin.

" What if thou wert Cræsus' heir,
What if thine was Cæsar's power,—
Place to sleep and clothes to wear,
Food and drink were all their dower.

" And of these the least is best,
For the most thou art their slave,
One must toil to be well drest,
Every palace is a grave.

" See the moccasined Indian stand,
In his breech clothed nakedness,
And upon the other hand,
Mark the fop's parade of dress.

" Which is puppet? which is man?
Which has wealth of brain and brawn?
Or for a sartorial plan,
Would'st thou put the soul in pawn?

" Though e'er since the dawn of Time,
Honor, Virtue, have been sold

The Last Day in the Hospital

To that Jezebel of Crime,
The wide reaching lust of Gold.

" But this is a special age,
Bastard of a hybrid Past,
Mounting all things on its stage,
Serio-comic still but vast.

" Vast its marvelous energies,
Bridling lightning, harnessing steam,
Vast its white fleet on the seas,
Vast its huge imperial dream.

" And in such a land as this,
Destined for a fate sublime,
Though the Hope of Freedom, 'tis
Still the raw recruit of Time.

" Still chaotic forces wake,
And with lawless vigor burn,
Now a negro at the stake,
Now a President in turn.

" See the despotism of Gold,
Crushing Labor to the soil!
And grown blatant, boastful, bold,
See the tyranny of Toil!

* * * *

" What if rich enough to be,
Th' adage of thy day and chief,

The Last Day in the Hospital

133

If on God's page thou canst see,
'Gainst thy name the label 'Thief'?

"Smug, respectable and neat,
Dives' days with riches dwell,
In the Church the foremost seat,
But at Death a place in hell.

"Hell! ah pardon me the word,
'Tis unfashionable now,
E'en the pulpit too has heard
Culture's mandate and must bow.

"Truth, who cares to know the Truth?
'Tis an opiate men require,
That they may sin on in sooth,
Nor feel Conscience dog Desire.

"'Tis not Day we seek nor Light,
Nor to bask in Truth's clear ray,
But owl eyes to pierce the Night,
And to tread the Dark as Day.

* * * * *

"Men since Babel have been found,
Who on Heaven made assault,
Now, descending to the ground,
Even Nature is at fault.

"These philosophers perplex
Her primeval plainest plan,

The Last Day in the Hospital

Would outlaw her scheme of sex,
Throning Woman over Man.

" Strident voiced and brazen cheeked,
Masculine in ways and air,
Is this hybrid thing and streaked,
What the poets call the fair?

" Lo, her idle days are spent,
Seeking some new Pleasure's thrill,
Or in spleen and discontent,
Nagging at a husband's will!

" There her ill-fed children lie,
Huddled in a cheerless room,
Or her cold abortions die
Murdered in her useless womb.

" Or to wilder life betrayed,
Under social order's ban,
Is this what the Lord God made,
As a helpmeet unto man?"

* * * * *

So as one who tries his throat,
With some long forgotten rune,
Slowly gathers note and note,
Till he melds the perfect tune.

So he gathered thought by thought,
All the gamut of his soul,

Till self-consciousness was brought,
From vague fragments to a whole.

So from fields of sleep and dreams,
He returned with memory
Of the vivid Past that teems
With the self he used to be.

Still at last it was the sight
Of a dear, long treasured face,
Brought him from vacant night,
To the day of self and place.

"Nurse, the summer day has fled,
If you have an hour to spare,
Sit you down beside my bed,
Let me thank you for your care.

"You have won me back to life,
Borne my humor, borne my frown,
Tenderer than a new wed wife,
To a husband stricken down.

"All my life has gone for naught,
From a woman's broken vow,
Ah, for years I little thought,
I could love again as now!

"But the love that mental strife,
Banished from this heart of mine,

The Last Day in the Hospital

Came again with fuller life,
Seeing that dear face of thine.

“ Strange, your face resembles her,
Strange, you bear her Christian name,
I could fancy that there were
Voice and mien in both the same.

“ She was of a type as fair
As fond Nature’s mold supplies,
With her wealth of raven hair,
And the treasure of her eyes.

“ Fool I was! but such is youth,
Captured by a sylph-like form,
Charms the choicest food forsooth,
Destined for the eyeless worm.

“ But her face, my fancy deemed,
Was but the expression fair,
Of the perfect soul that beamed
With a faint reflection there.

“ Would it had been—would my life
Had in smoother channels run,
With the sunshine of a wife,
And a family o’er me thrown.

“ Fool! to cast it all away,
For a faithless woman’s sake!
With my heart torn fresh each day,
Like Prometheus on his stake.

" Fool! and worse to leave my kind,
Feeding on myself alone,
Slowly narrowing down my mind,
Turning all my heart to stone.

" Sure in thoughts of larger spheres
Nature meant my mind to be,
Than to brood for bitter years,
O'er a woman's perjury.

" Surely Nature formed my heart,
For a larger fuller course,
Than to waste its better part,
In the love of dog and horse.

" Yet I know not, they at least,
Never have been so forsworn,
The affection of a beast
Often shames the human born.

" In my faithful dog or horse,
Would there any change occur,
If my clothes were fine or coarse?
Were their owner rich or poor?

" But my poverty was made,
Bar unto her sire's consent,
She her father's greed obeyed,
Bending as his will was bent.

" Still she loved me she averred!
But I left her in my scorn,

The Last Day in the Hospital

Who would trust a plighted word,
That so easily was o'erborne?

"He would sell her happiness,
Auctioning a daughter's heart,
As they sell for more or less,
Cattle in the cattle mart.

"Out upon the cursed tribe,
Simon Magus led of old,
Who would the Almighty bribe!
With the offer of their gold!

"In the love of honest hearts,
In esteem of noble minds,
Is it want of wealth that parts,
Or a band of gold that binds?

"Were my feelings not as fine,
Was my brain of lower range,
When this signature of mine,
Had no value on Exchange?

"What became of her? Who knows?
Probably some clod of gold,
Wealthy as her father chose,
Bought her as a slave is sold.

"Perhaps a better care to have
Than the crouching negress got,
Named a wife instead of slave,
Still a bargain sold and bought."

The Last Day in the Hospital

139

Darker fell upon the place
Evening shadows weird and grim,
And he could not see her face,
As she interrupted him.

"Cease from thy distempered mood,
Railing on without a cause,
False unto her womanhood,
Is the picture that it draws.

"Cast again thy memory back
To the final parting scene,
Though it be a sterile track,
Stretching drearily between.

"See a youth in fiery mood,
And a maiden young and fair,
In the twilight solitude,
'Neath the oak tree standing there.

"Hear his voice impulsive grown,
Proof of his imperious will,
List her gentler undertone,
Often scoffed yet pleading still.

"Will he reason? Will he hear?
Will he listen to her prayer?
See he turns a stone-deaf ear,
And abruptly leaves her there.

"And she watches him the while,
With her eyes in brimming tears,

The Last Day in the Hospital

Till he crosses o'er the stile,
And in distance disappears.

"Then she to her home returns,
And resumes her daily life,
Hides the burdened heart that mourns,
And her feelings constant strife.

"Illness seized her father's health,
And she nursed him till he died,
Leaving her his landed wealth,
And whate'er he owned beside.

"Fortune thus at her command,
Many suitors flocked and strove,
Long to win her heart and hand,
But she knew no second love.

"And the blush upon her cheek,
Daily grew more faint and pale,
Daily waned her strength more weak,
And her faith began to fail.

"Ten long summers had she mourned,
But the recreant never came,
And the love with which she burned,
Burned her hope out in its flame.

"So she gave her wealth away,
Keeping but a pittance scant,
To ensure her day by day,
From the carking cares of want.

The Last Day in the Hospital

141

" So she bade farewell to friends,
And became at last a nurse,
Seeking by unselfish ends,
To avert her life's great curse."

Rising feebly from his bed,
With excess of feeling dumb,
Opening wide his arms he said,
In a husky whisper, " Come ! "

As a fledgling from the nest,
Seeks the mother bird she crept,
Laid her head upon his breast,
And from very rapture wept.

Then with lover's words he cheers,
Clasps her often to his breast,
Kissing dry her flowing tears,
With a freedom unrepressed.

Tells her how in years of strife,
He amassed a golden store,
Which together with his life,
Will be her's forevermore.

So when parting came at last,
Parting till the coming day,
All the darkness of the Past,
Had in Sunshine fled away.

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